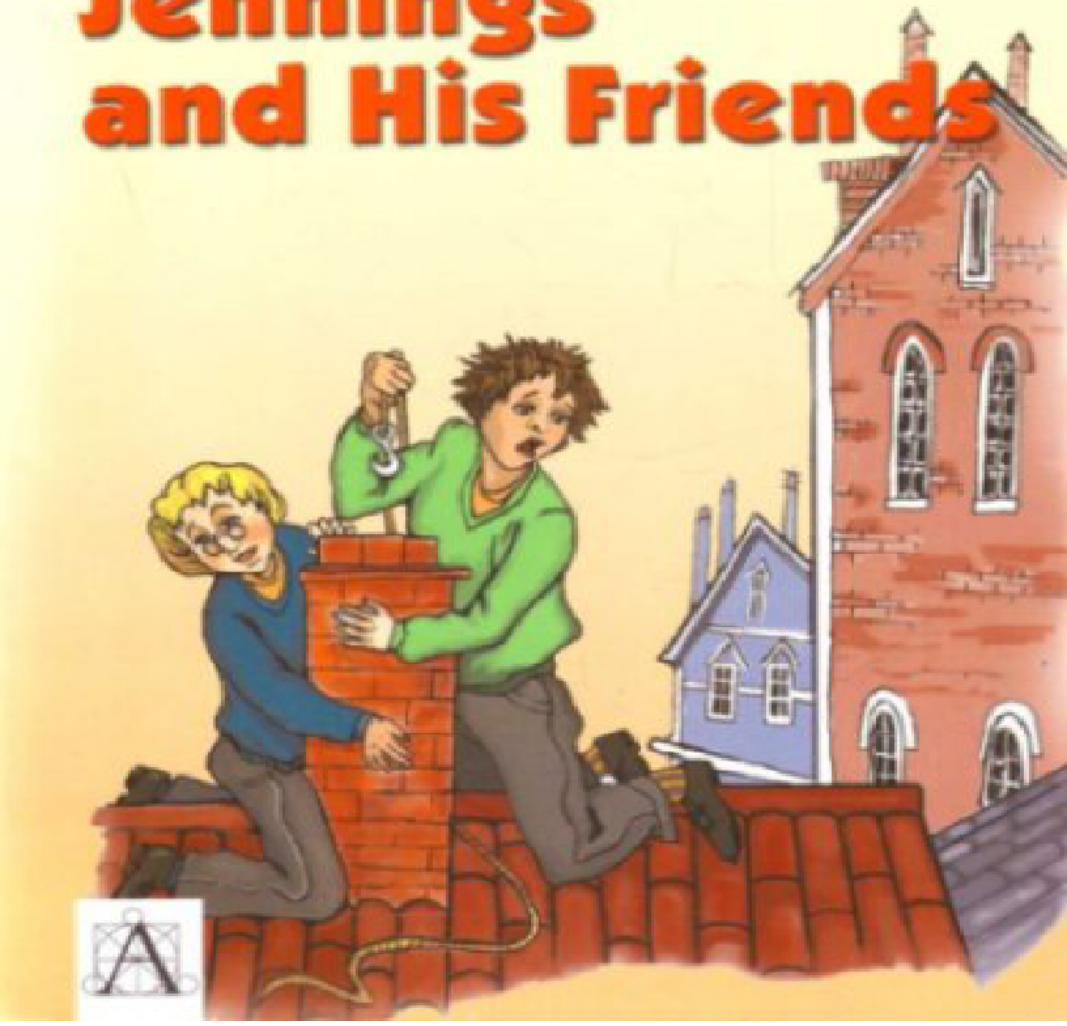
Antony Buckeridge

Reading Just for You!

Jennings and His Friends



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Annotation

Книга для чтения на английском языке для общеобразовательных учебных заведений (адаптация М.И.Дубровина). Книга `Дженнингс и его друзья` повествует о забавных и увлекательных приключениях школьников.

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Jennings and His Friends

Chapter One
Many happy returns of the day!

For one minute after Jennings opened his eyes that morning he could not understand why he had woken up so early. Then he remembered. It was his birthday! He wanted to jump out of bed and tell the boys about it. But all the boys in the dormitory of Linbury Court Boarding School were still sleeping.

Jennings got up and looked at the next bed along the line where Darbishire was sleeping. Darbishire was his best friend, though Jennings was a lively boy and his friend was very slow in all he did.

"Wake up, Darbi, wake up!" said Jennings.

"What's the matter?" Darbishire opened his eyes.

"It's my birthday today!"

"Yes, of course. Many happy returns of the day," said Darbishire. He closed his eyes and went back to sleep again.

"Oh, wake up, Darbi! Let's dress quickly and go and meet the postman. I'm going to get a birthday parcel from my parents."

Jennings went to the washbasin and began to wash. He cleaned his teeth, washed his face and hands, his neck and ears - it was his birthday! - and dried them on the towel. Then he turned from the washbasin and saw that Darbishire was still in bed.

"Get up, quickly, Darbi!"

"I'm coming," said Darbishire.

The bell rang and the boys in the beds near the washbasin, Venables, Temple and Atkinson, got up.

"I say, you don't know what day it is today," said Jennings.

"It's Friday," answered Venables, a tall boy, too tall for his twelve years. "It's Friday and we are going to have fish for breakfast. We usually have fish for breakfast on Fridays."

"Yes, but what else?" asked Jennings.

"What else? Tea with milk."

"No, I don't mean that. It's my birthday."

"Many happy returns," said Atkinson

"We are going to have a birthday cake today, aren't we" said Venables.

"Certainly," said Jennings. "My mother is sending me a wonderful cake. I'm going to the hall to see if the postman is coming."

But when Jennings ran up to the door, it opened and the teacher on duty came into the dormitory. It was Mr Wilkins.

Mr Wilkins was a large and strong man. He could be pleasant when he wanted to, but he was not a patient man and he did not

understand why the boys of twelve could not behave like teachers, for example.

"Why are you making that noise, Jennings?" asked Mr Wilkins. "And why have you already dressed? You know very well that pupils must not get up before the bell."

"Yes, of course. But I hurried to the hall to see..."

"You know well," repeated Mr Wilkins, "that you must stay in bed till the bell rings. Very well, you will stay in class during football this afternoon and do some work for me"

"Yes, sir," said Jennings, but to himself he said: "Boys who have birthdays in the holidays don't know how happy they are."

"Please, sir! Mr Wilkins, sir!" It was Darbishire with one sock on and the other in his hand.

"What's the matter, Darbishire? Hurry up!" said Mr Wilkins.

"It's Jennings' birthday today, sir, and he wanted to go down to the hall to meet the postman."

"Oh! Well, if it's his birthday... Well, let's forget about it."

Mr Wilkins looked angrily at those boys who were not celebrating a birthday that morning and left the dormitory.

"Thank you, Darbi," said Jennings. "It was very nice of you to tell Old Wilkie that it was my birthday. I didn't want to stay in class during football on my birthday."

"All right," said Darbishire. "You can call it my birthday present to you if you like."

"Thank you very much. Now put on your left sock and we'll go down to the hall and see if the postman has come."

Darbishire put on his left sock, then his spectacles and the boys hurried to the hall where they saw three letters for Jennings and three parcels

"The big parcel is my birthday cake. But what is in the other two?" said Jennings.

They opened the parcels at once. There was Jennings' birthday cake in the first parcel, of course. When they opened the second parcel, from his father, Jennings was very happy.

"A camera! That's what I wanted to have for my birthday! We can do a lot of things with a camera, can't we, Darbi?"

"Yes, we can," answered Darbishire, "but let's not do a lot of things with the camera. Let's take photos with it."

"That's what I meant. I can take a photo of you when you are standing up, for example, and then you can take a photo of me when I am sitting down, and then I can take a photo of you when you are sitting down, and you can take..."

"There's another parcel," said Darbishire

"Oh, yes, of course. From Aunt Angela."

Chapter Two.
The Junior Printing Outfit.

When the boys opened the last parcel they saw a square box.

"The Junior Printing Outfit!" read Darbishire.

They opened the box and saw letters made of small pieces of rubber and a pair of tweezers with which they could take the letters and put them in the printing block.

"How wonderful!" said Darbishire. "Now we can print our names on all our books."

"Yes, but the first thing that I'm going to use it for is to answer all these birthday letters," answered Jennings, "because I usually write the same things to my father, mother and Aunt Angela."

Darbishire took a row of rubber letters with the help of the tweezers from the box and began to look at them. But he could not see much because his spectacles were too dusty.

"I can't see whether these letters are e's or a's," he said. "My father says that..."

But at that moment he pressed to hard with the tweezers and all the little rubber letters were at once in the four corners of the big hall.

"I'm very sorry," said Darbishire.

The breakfast bell rang.

"What are we going to do?" asked Jennings.

"I don't know," answered Darbishire. "All those letters were the same - e's or a's."

Jennings looked in the box and saw that Darbishire was right. There was a row of a's, a row of b's, a row of c's, a row of d's and there wasn't an e in the box!

"We'll come back after breakfast," said Jennings.

But after breakfast it was too late. When the boys came back to the hall they saw no letters on the floor: the floor was clean.

"Somebody has cleaned the floor with a vacuum cleaner," said Jennings.

For a moment they stood and looked at the clean floor. Then Jennings turned and went to the common room. Darbishire went after him.

"How am I going to write my letters now?" Jennings said.

"You can write something which doesn't have e's"

"Don't be funny," said Jennings.

"During breakfast I decided to print a Form Three wall newspaper. We can print all the news about Form Three in it and hang it on the wall."

"That will be wonderful."

"Yes, but we can't print any news which has an e in it. Well, I can ask Aunt Angela to send me some e's."

After tea that evening Jennings sat down at the table in the common room to answer his birthday letters. He wanted to try his printing outfit on his letters before he could begin to print a wall newspaper. He put x's in place of e's and soon the letter was ready. When Darbishire went into the common room Jennings showed him the letter.

"I say," Jennings said. "All that I must do now is..."

"Yes, but I have something to tell you," Darbishire began

"Never mind! Look at this!"

"I was only going to say...

Jennings put the letter under Darbishire's nose.

"Not bad, is it?" he asked. "Of course we must get these e's before we begin to print our well newspaper."

Darbishire began to read the letter.

"Dxar Aunt Angxla! Thank you for your birthday prxsxnt. I likxd all thx birthday prxsxnts which I had. Fathxr sxnt mx a cavxra and..."

Darbishire stopped and said: "Well, I know what you bean, of course, but..."

"You mean these x's. but I've written P.S. on Aunt Angela's letter. She will understand it."

Darbishire read: "P.S. Plxasx, sxnd mx somx of lxttxrs which comx bxtwxxn d and f."

When Darbishire finished reading the letter he put his hand into his pocket and took out some rubber letters.

"These are the e's that I lost this morning," he said and he put them on the table.

"What?"

"Yes, I've taken them out of the dust bag of the vacuum cleaner. Now you can write your letters using all the letters, can't you?"

"I can, but now that we have all the letters we must begin a Form Three wall newspaper."

Chapter Three
Jennings and Darbishire go to the Harbour

All the pupils of Form Three liked the hobbies' hour because during the hobbies' hour they could do what they liked and how they liked.

During the hobbies' hour after tea on the next Monday Jennings and Darbishire sat at a table with some paper and pencils in front of them. They sat between Atkinson who was making a toy for his sister's birthday and Venables who was making a great noise.

"Now, Darbi, let's give our wall newspaper a name," Jennings began. "Let's call it the Form Three Times"

"That's a good name," said Darbishire.

Then they decided to print the first issue of the Form Three Times next week.

When the other boys heard the news about the wall newspaper they came up to Jennings and Darbishire.

"If you want some news you can come to me for it, Jennings," said Temple. "I'm not pulling your leg. There was a disappearance."

"Who has disappeared - Mr Wilkins?" asked Darbishire.

"No, my left football boot has disappeared. And if you want to know how a burglar could do it I can tell you. He left his car in the school yard when we were all in the classroom and... "

"Why did he take only one boot?" asked Jennings.

"Maybe he has only one leg."

"If he has only one leg how can he play football?"

Temple could not answer that question.

"Well," Jennings turned to Darbishire, "if we want to make our newspaper interesting we must take some photos and put them in the newspaper."

"Yes," said Darbishire, "I can take a photo of you when you are sitting down and you can take a photo of me when I'm..."

"No," said Jennings. "Who will want to see you when you are sitting down. We must take some interesting photos. We can go to the harbour and take a photo of a ship, for example."

"All right," said Darbishire, "let's ask permission to go to the harbour next Sunday."

When Sunday came it was raining. But after breakfast the sun came out and Jennings and Darbishire went to Mr Carter, the teacher on duty. They asked permission to go to the harbour. When Mr Carter gave them permission the boys took the camera and hurried to the harbour.

Soon they came to the harbour. It was a small harbour and there was only one fishing boat there that afternoon. The name of the boat was "Sainte Marie".

"It's French," said Darbishire when he saw the name of the boat.

Five Frenchmen sat on deck mending their nets. The boys stood looking at them for a long time. At last Darbishire said: "Why are we standing and looking at them? Let's go and ask permission to take a photo of them. My father says you must strike while the iron is hot."

"All right, let's go," said Jennings. And they went to the fishing boat.

"Excuse me," said Jennings when they came up to the boat.

There was no answer from the boat. Five pairs of hands were working quickly.

"Excuse me," repeated Jennings loudly.

The hands stopped working and the five fishermen turned their heads towards the boys.

"My friend and I want to ask permission to come on deck and take some photos of you for our newspaper," said Jennings.

No answer. The fishermen looked at the boys with surprise.

"What I mean is there will be a wonderful picture of you mending your nets."

"Comment?" said one of the fishermen.

"What did he say?" asked Darbishire.

"I don't know. Something like 'come on'."

"No," he said, 'comment' means, 'how many', or 'what' or something else in French."

"I will tell him that I want to take only one photo," Jennings said to Darbishire. And he said loudly, "I want only one photo."

But the fishermen did not understand Jennings.

"Comment?" another fisherman asked.

"It can't mean 'how many'. I've told him that I wanted to take only one photo and now he has asked again. Maybe he means 'come on'. Let's go," Jennings said to Darbishire.

Soon the boys were on deck. The fishermen smiled at their visitors, but did not say a word because they did not speak English.

"Good afternoon, it's very nice to be here," said Jennings.

"Comment?" asked the third fisherman.

"We can't come on. We are already here," said Jennings.

"They don't understand English" said Darbishire.

The fishermen began to speak French, and then one of them said something in French to Darbishire.

"Maybe he says that they don't speak English and that you must talk to them in French if you want to take a photo," said Darbishire.

"Me talk to hem in French? But you are one of the best pupils in

the French class. Ask them if we can take their photo," said Jennings.

"I can't. I don't remember the words."

"Please, Darbi, say something."

Darbishire thought and said what he could.

"Attention, mes braves! Nous voulons du poisson... No, no! What I mean is..."

But the fishermen began to smile: they understood at last! They turned and hurried below deck.

Jennings looked at them in surprise: "Where are they all hurrying to?"

"Well.. you see..." began Darbishire, " I think I've made a mistake. I didn't remember the French for 'fisherman' and said 'poisson' which means 'fish'"

"Do you mean you called them 'fish', and they got angry and ran from the deck?"

"No, I think I said we want some fish."

"How could you say that?"

Darbishire did not answer.

"Never mind," said Jennings. "I've taken a good photo of them. They don't know I took it because they were talking to you."

"That's good. Let's go home then. I'm happy it's all over."

But when they turned to go they saw the five fishermen again. They were coming on deck with fish in their hands.

"Thank you very much," said Jennings, "but..."

"C'est pour votre maman," said one of the Frenchmen.

Darbishire understood. "He says that we must take the fish home to our mothers," he said.

"Tell him we don't have mothers at boarding school. Thank them and tell them we don't want any fish," said Jennings.

"I can't. There are too many words there that I don't know. Let's take the fish and go."

"But we don't want it. What can we do with it?"

"We must take the fish. It is a present. The fisherman think we have come here only for fish. They are happy to give it to us. They will not like it if we don't take the fish."

"All right," said Jennings and took the fish from one of the Frenchmen. Then the others hurried to the boys and gave them the fish they had in their hands.

After that one of the fisherman took a newspaper out of his pocket and made up a big parcel of the fish. Yes, the men from "Sainte Marie" were very kind people.

Chapter Four
Jennings and Darbishire meet Mr Carter.

"We can't take the parcel to school," Jennings said when the boys left the fishing boat

"Why not? There is no rule about it, is there?" said Darbishire.

"There must be. I think Matron will get angry if we came to tea with the fish. And if there isn't a rule, there soon will be one. Rule number nine hundred and ninety-nine: Any boy who comes to boarding school with a parcel of fish shall stay in class during football."

"Well, let's leave it somewhere before we come to school."

But this was not so easy. There were no trees or bushes on their way to school, and an old woman with a dog was walking behind them.

"We can't leave it here," decided Jennings. "Well, what shall we do with it?... I'll tell you what, Darbi. We'll take it to school and put it in my tuck-box."

"Yes," said Darbishire, "and then we can take it home to our mothers when we go on holidays." Jennings looked at his friend angrily:

"Sometimes you don't think before you speak."

"I see what you mean. But then why take it with us?"

"To eat, of course."

"What - raw! Thank you, Jen. I'm not a cat."

"I'm not going to eat it raw. I'm not a cat either. What we'll do is this. We'll get up early tomorrow and develop our film in the school dark room. There is a gas-cooker there and we'll fry a nice fish breakfast."

"What shall we fry it in?"

"In developing dishes, of course."

"Where can we get butter?"

"I'll think about that," said Jennings.

Darbishire thought it was a good plan: teachers do not come into the dark room when pupils develop the film there.

When the boys were near the school Jennings sent Darbishire to see if there was anybody near the building. Jennings put the parcel on the ground. At that moment Darbishire ran back.

"Mr Carter," he said. "He's coming here."

Jennings wanted to put the parcel quickly under his raincoat. But when he took it from the ground the newspaper dissolved into pulp and the fish fell on the ground. For a moment Jennings did not know

what to do. Then, quickly, he began to put the fish into his raincoat pockets.

"Don't stand there, Darbi! Do something!" said Jennings.

Darbishire began to put the fish in his pockets too. Jennings had soon found a place of all except one.

At that moment he saw Mr Carter. Jennings took of his cap, put the last fish in it, and put the cap on quickly.

Mr Carter was a very kind and cleaver man, and all the boys in the boarding school liked him.

"Good afternoon, sir, " said Darbishire and took of his cap.

Jennings looked at him angrily. "Why did he do that. He knows well that I can't take of my cap," he thought.

"Good afternoon. You've come back early," said Mr Carter. "Did you have a good walk?"

"Yes, thank you, sir. We went to the harbour," said Jennings. " I took very good photos of a fishing boat and some fishermen."

At that moment Darbishire saw that Mr Carter was looking at Jennings' cap.

"They were Frenchmen, sir," said Darbishire. "And I had a little talk with them."

"Yes, sir," said Jennings, "they were Frenchmen and Darbishire called them 'fish'."

"Oh, sir, I didn't call them that, sir! Jennings doesn't know French well and he couldn't understand what I said to them."

"And could the Frenchmen?" asked Mr Carter.

"Yes and no, sir," said Darbishire.

"Well, the first thing which you two boys can do, is to go and take the fish out of your pockets."

So Mr Carter knew about the fish!

Mr Carter turned to Jennings.

"Fish may be good for the brain, but not when you put them in the head under your cap."

"I'm sorry, " said Jennings. "They are a present. We didn't want to take them but we didn't know how to say it in French."

"I see. Well, I think you must take the fish out of your pockets. After that Jennings, you can hang your coats in the school yard and then wash you hair."

"Yes, sir."

When Mr Carter left the boys Jennings looked at his friend's sad face and said, "why are you so sad, Darbi? We'll develop the photos and then - well, Mr Carter didn't say we mustn't eat them, did he?"

"The photos?"

"No, you silly. Why don't you listen when I talk to you?"

"Mr Carter said..."

"He didn't say that we mustn't eat the fish. He said that we must take them out of our pockets. We can take them out of our pockets and put them in my tuck-box. Then we can fry them with pepper and salt."

Before tea Jennings and Darbishire began to prepare for the next day. They had to ask permission to use the dark room. They decided not to ask Mr Carter. So they asked Mr Hid, a History an Music teacher. Mr Hid was a good photographer and was only to happy to give his permission. Then the boys had to get some butter. They did not eat any butter at tea-time, but took it out of the dining hall in an envelope.

Chapter Five
"Wonderful" Breakfast.

It was seven o'clock when Jennings got out of bed the next morning and began to wake Darbishire up. But Darbishire did not want to get up so early. The weather was bad: it was raining, and his bed was so warm.

"Can't we do it some other time? One day next week, for example," Darbishire said.

"No, we can't. The fish won't keep."

Darbishire got up and began to dress.

The boys dressed and went out of the dormitory. They went to the tuck-box room for the fish and then to the dark room. When they went into the dark room Darbishire quickly bolted the door.

"It's good we didn't meet any teacher in the corridor," he said. "What shall we do first -fry the fish or develop the film?"

"I've developed the film already," Jennings answered to his friend's surprise. "I came here yesterday after supper. So now we have a lot of time for our wonderful breakfast."

"Are the photos good?" asked Darbishire.

"Y-y-yes," answered Jennings.

That was not the time to talk about the photos. Jennings took a developing dish and washed it. Then he took the butter from his pocket and some fish from the parcel, and put them on the developing dish.

"Shut the window, Darbi. If there is somebody in the school yard he will know that we are not developing a film if he sees that the window is open."

The window-panes were black, and when Darbishire shut the window it was dark in the room. Jennings took a candle out of the red lamp, and lit it. Then he lit the gas and held the developing dish over the gas. And then!..

Tongues of flame were licking the sides of the developing dish and leaping towards the ceiling.

Jennings dropped the developing dish on the floor.

"What's the matter?" asked Darbishire.

Jennings did not answer. The developing dish was burning on the floor. Jennings took the parcel of fish from the table and dropped it on the burning developing dish. The boys saw a cloud of smoke but the fire was out.

"What's the matter?" Darbishire repeated his question.

"The developing dish was celluloid," answered Jennings.

"But why did you use a celluloid developing dish, Jen? Every little boy knows that it burns."

"Let's not talk about it. It's all over now."

But it was not all over. The room was full of smoke. The boys began to cough.

"Open the window, quick," said Jennings.

Darbishire ran up to the widow and put his head out into the cool morning.

"You don't know, Jen, what a nice and cool morning it is!" he said and took off his spectacles.

Then he put his spectacles on again, looked through them and quickly shut the window.

"What's the matter?" asked Jennings.

"Mr Wilkins! He is out in the school yard! He saw my head."

"What shall we do?"

The boys stood and listened. The room was still full of smoke. Soon they heard a knock on the glass.

"Open the window! It was Mr Wilkins. He couldn't see through the black window - panes.

"Open the window, at once!" repeated Mr Wilkins.

No answer. What are these silly little boys doing there, he wondered? Had they hurried out of the room when they saw him? He went away from the window, turned the corner of the building and went in the door.

"He's coming," said Darbishire. "What shall we do? He knows we weren't developing: we couldn't do it with the window open."

"Let's open the window," said Jennings. "The room is still full of smoke. He's be near the dark room in a minute, and we'll have to open the door."

Darbishire opened the window and the boys began to clean the room.

"Open this door!" It was Mr Wilkins again. Now he was at the door.

"Where shall we put the parcel?" asked Jennings.

There was no place for it, and Jennings decided to hold the parcel behind his back under his coat.

"Will you open the door?" Mr Wilkins was very angry.

Darbishire opened the door and Mr Wilkins came in.

"What are you doing here?"

The boys did not answer. But Mr Wilkins' nose answered the question. "Something is burning."

"Yes, sir. A developing dish caught fire by chance. But now it's all over, sir."

"We'll soon see," said Mr Wilkins and began to walk round the

room.

Jennings walked behind him: he couldn't turn his back on Mr Wilkins.

"I don't know much about photography," said Mr Wilkins. "But if you can burn the building when you develop a film it is not a hobby that I like. Do you have permission to be in here, boys?"

"Yes, sir, yesterday Mr Hind gave us permission to develop the film, but I don't think that he knows that we are here now."

"So you don't have permission to be here now. And you've got up before the bell! Go to my room and wait for me at the door."

"Yes, sir."

Jennings went out of the room with his back to the door. Darbishire went after him.

Chapter Six.
Jennings Hides the Parcel.

When the boys went along the corridor Darbishire said, "What are we going to do? We can't take this parcel to Old Wilkie's room, can we?"

"We must hide it somewhere."

"But where?"

They went to Mr Wilkins' door.

"What shall we do? He'll be here in a minute," said Darbishire. Jennings decided to do something.

"Open his door, quick," he said to Darbishire.

"You are not going to hide it in Old Wilkie's room - are you?"

"There is no other place, is there?"

Darbishire opened the door and the boys went into Mr Wilkins' room. It was a small room. There was a table, three chairs, an arm-chair, a cupboard and a bookcase in it. The boys looked around and understood that there was no place to hide the parcel.

From the corridor they heard Mr Wilkins' footsteps.

"Go out and talk to him," said Jennings.

"What about?"

"I don't know. Something interesting. The weather, for example."

"The weather?..."

"Please, Darbi, do as I say."

Darbishire left his friend and hurried to the corridor. Mr Wilkins was coming up to his room and his face told Darbishire that the teacher was not going to talk to him about the weather.

"What were you doing in my room, Darbishire?" he asked.

"I... I... I... am coming out, sir."

"I can see that. But I told you to wait at my door."

Mr Wilkins opened the door and went into his room. Darbishire went after him. He was so frightened that he closed his eyes. When he opened them he was greatly surprised.

Jennings was standing on the carpet. He had no parcel in his hands. There was no parcel under his coat either. Darbishire looked around the room. "Where has Jennings hidden the parcel?" Darbishire could not answer this question. He looked around the room again.

"What's the matter with you, Darbishire?" asked Mr Wilkins. "Have you lost anything?"

"No, sir. Thank you, sir," answered Darbishire.

"Darbishire and Jennings, you developed the photos without permission, and you did it before the bell. So you will do an hour's

work for me on Saturday afternoon."

"Yes. Sir. May we go, sir?"

"You may."

When the boys went out into the corridor Jennings said, "Well, that wasn't so bad, was it? If he knew that we fried fish in the dark room!"

"Yes, where is it?" asked Darbishire.

"The dark room? You know that well."

"No, where is the parcel of fish?"

"Oh, that! Well, I had to do something, quick."

"And what did you do, quick?"

I put it in Old Wilkie's chimney."

"What!"

"What could I do? It was all very fine for you to stand at the door, and I..."

"But we can't leave the parcel there for ever."

"No, we can't. but we have to say goodbye to our early breakfast."

At that moment the breakfast bell rang, and Jennings and Darbishire went down to the dining hall.

"Where have you been?" Venables asked when Jennings and Darbishire sat down at breakfast.

"Yesterday Mr Hind said that I could develop my film in the dark room. And when we were using a developing dish as a frying pan it began to burn. At that moment Old Wilkie came..."

"Why did you fry the photos?" asked Venables.

"Oh, I don't mean the photos. We were frying the fish."

"What fish?"

"The fish in Old Wilkie's chimney."

Venables could not understand it. Then Darbishire explained it all to him.

"It will be easy to take it from the chimney when Old Wilkie isn't in the room," said Venables.

"It is all very fine for you to talk," said Jennings. "I'd like to see you do it."

Of course, Jennings had decided to get the parcel from the chimney, but he did not want to let anybody say that it was easy.

Darbishire did not eat much at breakfast that morning. He was thinking about his plan to get the parcel back from Mr Wilkins' chimney. "I'll go to Old Wilkie's room," thought Darbishire, "and knock at the door. If there is no answer it will mean that there is nobody in the room. If there is an answer - well, then I'll see what to do. But I must do in quickly. Today is Monday, and this evening Jennings and I wanted to begin to print the first issue of the Form Three Times."

Chapter Seven
Vain Attempts

Mr Wilkins was reading a morning newspaper when he heard the first knock at his door. He called: "Come in!" Nobody came.

Mr Wilkins went to the door, opened it, and saw Darbishire who was running along the corridor.

"Darbishire!" he shouted.

At that moment one of Derbyshire's house-shoes came off and he stopped.

"Yes, sir?"

"What are you doing?"

"I'm putting on my house-shoe."

"I can see that. This doesn't explain why you knocked at my door and then ran along the corridor. Do you want to see me?"

"No, sir."

"Then what do you want?"

Darbishire thought. Of course, he did not want to see anybody in Mr Wilkins' room. But he could not say it. What did he want then? There must be something that he could want.

"I want a stamp, sir. I want to write a letter to me grandmother."

"If you wanted a stamp why didn't you ask for it?" asked Mr Wilkins.

He went into his room and towards his desk. Darbishire stopped at the door and looked at the fireplace. Mr Wilkins took a stamp from the desk and gave it to Darbishire. Darbishire thanked him and left the room.

He often visited Mr Wilkins' room that day. But every time Mr Wilkins was in his room. He asked for another stamp, then another and another. During the day Mr Wilkins gave him four stamps. Another time he asked Mr Wilkins for a ruler, then for an eraser. Before dinner he asked Mr Wilkins for his autograph. After dinner he came to ask whether "Sir" could tell him what the time was. It was five o'clock, and Mr Wilkins decided to go for a walk: he was very tired of Derbyshire's visits.

"If that child comes to my room again he will be unlucky." Mr Wilkins said to himself as he was leaving his room.

Darbishire was unlucky. He was also very tired and decided not to go to Mr Wilkins' room any more. He went to the common room and saw Jennings there. Jennings was gathering the news for the first issue of the Form Three Times.

"Where have you been, Darbi?" his friend asked. "Every break

when I wanted your help you had gone somewhere."

"I wanted to get that parcel back," said Darbishire.

"Did you get it back?"

"No, I didn't. every time I went to Old Wilkie's room he was there."

"If we can't get that parcel back soon he will not be able to sit in his room. Soon he'll begin to wonder what's going on in his room."

"Let's better think out a plan how we can get the parcel back," said Darbishire.

"Let's." Jennings thought and then said, "We'll have a football game on Wednesday. Old Wilkie will be the referee. At the end of the game I'll hurry to his room, and you'll ask Old Wilkie some questions about the game and keep him on the field. All right?"

"All right," said Darbishire, he liked the plan.

Then they began to print the Form three Times. For a while they put the rubber letters in the printing block. After three quarters of an hour passed they were already tired. They began to understand that to print a short letter was one thing, and to print a big wall newspaper was another.

"We shall never finish it," said Jennings. We must print twelve pages for the newspaper. After three quarters of an hour we are only on the second line of page one. It'll take us..." he thought, "ninety-six weeks to print twelve pages."

"I don't want to say anything bad about your Aunt Angela's present, but if we had had a typewriter..."

"We don't know how to type and we haven't a typewrite."

"No, but Mr Carter has," said Jennings quickly.

"I don't think Mr Carter will let us borrow his typewriter."

"I don't think so either. But I think he may type the newspaper for us."

Mr Carter was correcting mistakes in his pupils' exercise-books when he heard a knock at his door.

"Come in!" he called.

Jennings and Darbishire came into Mr Carter's room.

"Well, boys, what can I do for you?" asked Mr Carter.

"Well, sir, Darbishire and me would like you to do us a favour, sir," Jennings began.

"No, Darbishire and I would like you to do us a favour, Jennings," he corrected.

Jennings looked at Mr Carter in surprise.

"Did you, sir? Darbishire never told me," said Jennings.

"I mean, Jennings, that you must say 'Darbishire and I', not 'Darbishire and me'."

"Yes, sir. Well, will you do Darbishire and I a favour, please, sir?"

"This time, Jennings, it's correct to say 'Darbishire and me'."

"All right, sir. Darbishire and I or me are writing a wall newspaper and we wondered if you could lend us your typewriter to type the newspaper."

"I don't think I can lend you me typewriter. It's not a toy, you know."

"I know, sir. It's not a toy, sir," said Jennings. "We think so, too. Excuse me, sir."

But the boys were not going to leave the room. They stood and hoped. Mr Carter understood what that hope meant.

"Of course," he said, "I may type it for you. But let me see what you are going to write in your newspaper."

Jennings gave Mr Carter the exercise book. Mr Carter read it slowly, then said, "Very well. I'll type it for you. Is this all?"

"No, sir. We want to organize one or two competitions," answered Darbishire, "but we haven't decided yet what they are going to be."

"Why not have a handwriting competition," said Mr Carter.

"Very good, sir," said Darbishire. "That will be one competition. And for the second competition we can have... what?"

Mr Carter spoke again.

"Why not ask your readers to write a poem or something like that."

"Wonderful!" said Jennings. "And we can give the winners big cakes."

"But we haven't any big cakes," said Darbishire.

"I know, but if I ask my Aunt Angela to send me two big cakes for the competition she will certainly do it."

Chapter Eight
The Form Three Times

The following morning Jennings and Darbishire hung the first issue of the Form Three Times on the notice-board. There were a lot of boys near it and they liked the newspaper. There was only one boy who did not like it. It was Temple. He did not like it because there wasn't a story about his football boot. He had already found his boot, but he was ready to hide it again because he wanted to read his story in the newspaper.

There was another boy who could not say anything good about the newspaper. He could not say anything bad about it either. He did not see the newspaper. It was Bromwich.

Jennings saw him in the tuck-box room. Bromwich was making a toy bus for his little brother.

"Have you seen my newspaper," Jennings began.

"No, I haven't," answered Bromwich. "All the time you lose your things and think that every boy must know where they are."

"No, I haven't lost it! I mean have you seen it up in the wall?"

Bromwich looked at Jennings in surprise.

"How could it get up there?" he asked.

Jennings explained, and Bromwich decided to go and see the newspaper.

When they came to the common room a lot of boys were still standing near the wall newspaper. They were talking about the two competitions and the two big cakes.

"I could do with one of these big cakes," said Temple.

"I think I'll try to write a poem," said Atkinson. He turned to Venables who was standing near him. "You can take part in the other competition - you have a beautiful handwriting."

"I don't know," said Venables. "I haven't decided yet which competition I shall take part in." He came up to the notice-board and began to read the rules: "Those who want to take part in the competitions must send their poems or twenty lines of their best handwriting by Friday. Do not write on one side of the paper..." here Venables stopped. "I say, Darbishire, came here. I don't understand this rule. If we can't write on one side of the paper, what can we do?

Darbishire came up. He was the author of the rules. "You can write on the other side, can't you?" he asked.

"How shall we know which the other side is?"

"It doesn't matter. I mean that it will be better if you only write on one side at a time, or.."

"You want to say we mustn't write on more that two sides of the paper?" asked Atkinson.

"No, you mustn't write on more that one side of the paper," said Darbishire.

Venables turned to the rules. "Take your poems or twenty lines of your best handwriting to the tuck-box room, and do not forget to write 'Competition' in the top left-hand corner."

"I can't reach the top left-hand corner of the tuck-box room if I don't stand on the table," said Atkinson.

"It doesn't mean that! You don't want to understand," said Darbishire and left the common room.

* * *

When Jennings woke up next morning the first think he thought about was food. Jennings liked to eat and he often thought about food when he woke up. But this time he didn't think about the food that he wanted to eat. He thought about the two big cakes and the parcel of fish.

He knew that Darbishire could help him to get the parcel back. But how could he get two big cakes? His Aunt Angela was a very kind woman, but she very often forgot things. He decided to write to her at once.

He began the letter during the first break and finished it during Mr Hind's history lesson.

Before the football game, as Jennings and Darbishire were putting on their football boots, Jennings said to his friend, "Don't forget, Darbi. After the game is over I'll run to Old Wilkie's room and you must keep him on the field. Ask him any questions that you like, but don't let him go before you see me wave from the school yard. That will mean that I've got the parcel from the chimney."

"All right," answered Darbishire.

The weather was bad that afternoon and Mr Wilkins was not sorry when the game was over. At once Darbishire came up to him.

"Sir, please, sir, will you explain something, please, sir?"

"Well, what is it? Hurry up, I don't want to stay here all day."

"Well, sir, if, for example, I was centre forward for the white shirts and I kicked the ball to Temple who was on my right, and there was nobody in front of him, and he didn't get the ball, and Venables, who was centre forward for the green shirts, got it and kicked it to Jennings who kicked it to Atkinson who played for the green shirts,

and Bromwich was coming behind him in a white shirts, and there was nobody in front of him, will it be off side, sir?"

"I don't understand you, Darbishire. Will who be off side?"

"Well, Bromwich, for example, sir. Or if not Bromwich, then one of the others."

"I don't understand what you are talking about. Darbishire. Let's go to my room, and I'll give you a book of rules of the game." He turned and left the football field.

"Oh, don't go, sir. Please, don't go. Do you think I played well this afternoon, sir?"

"No, I don't think so, Darbishire."

"Can you show me how to play football well, sir?"

"Not in these shoes, thank you," Mr Wilkins pointed to his new shoes. "Then it's too cold here. I'm going to my room to light the fire. The Headmaster is going to visit me at 4 o'clock, and... Well Darbishire, where are your spectacles?"

"My spectacles!" exclaimed Darbishire. "I've lost hem. I know I had them when we began to play."

Mr Wilkins and Darbishire went back to the football field. After some time they found the spectacles near the goal.

"Jennings has had a lot of time to get that parcel from the chimney, my spectacles helped him," thought Darbishire. He thanked Mr Wilkins for help and let him go.

Chapter Nine
Jennings and Darbishire go fishing

Jennings hurried from the football field and went to Mr Wilkins' room. He opened the door and went in. He looked at the fireplace. A fire was laid and Jennings understood that Mr Wilkins was going to light the fire. "It's a good thing I've come now," he thought.

He hurried to the fireplace and put his hand up the chimney. There was nothing there.

"Old Wilkie has found it," he said to himself. "No," he thought at once, "Old Wilkie is not a man to keep it a secret."

Jennings put his head up the chimney but he couldn't see anything.

At that moment he heard footsteps in the corridor. "Will they pass by or will they come in?" he thought.

The door opened and Mr Pemberton, the Headmaster, stood in the doorway. Mr Pemberton looked at Jennings and saw soot on his face and hands.

"May I ask what you are doing, Jennings?"

"I... I... was putting my head up the chimney, sir."

"I can see that, but I can't understand why!"

"I wanted to see how far I could see up the chimney."

"I see." Mr Pemberton was an old teacher. He knew that twelve-year-old boys could sometimes do the things that no teacher could hope to understand. So he wasn't surprised when Jennings told him why he was putting his head up the chimney.

"I think, Jennings, that Mr Wilkins has sent you here," said the Headmaster. "But you mustn't come to his room in your football boots. Go down and change them."

"Yes, sir."

Jennings left Mr Wilkins' room and went to change his football boots.

Near the changing-room he met Darbishire.

"Is everything all right?" asked Darbishire. I kept Old Wilkie out in the field but you didn't wave your hand to me. It's a good thing you took the parcel, because Old Wilkie has gone to his room to light the fire."

"What?"

"Yes, he wants to make the room warm because the Headmaster is going to visit him."

"But I haven't got the parcel from the chimney."

"What?"

"The Headmaster came into the room, saw me in my football boots and told me to go and change them."

"But why didn't you take off your football boot's? No, what I mean is..."

"Never mind, Darbi. I have a new plan. We'll go fishing."

"No, we can't go fishing. We must get that parcel back."

"Yes, I know. Listen, Darbi. If we can't get the parcel from below let's get it from above. All we need is a big hook and a long piece of string."

Mr Wilkins chimney was on a flat roof. The boys could get there from an attic-window, drop the hook down the chimney and get the parcel from it. That was Jennings' new plan.

The boys changed out of their football kit quickly. Then they found a big hook and a long string, went up to the attic-window, then out of the attic-window onto the roof and hurried to Mr Wilkins' chimney.

* * *

Mr Wilkins sat on a chair near his fire. It was warm in the room and he did not want to light the fire yet. He was listening to the Headmaster who was talking about Algebra lessons in the school.

Suddenly Mr Wilkins looked at the fireplace and saw something. He could not believe it! He closed his eyes, opened them, and looked at the fireplace again, the thing was still there.

"Are you listening to me, Wilkins?" said Mr Pemberton.

The Headmaster looked at the fireplace too, and saw a big hook. It was swinging from side to side. For a moment Mr Palmerton and Mr Wilkins looked at the hook, in surprise.

Then the Headmaster spoke.

"What is it?" he said.

"It's a hook," said Mr Wilkins.

"Yes, yes, I can see that, Wilkins. But what is it doing in your fireplace? Do you boil kettles in you fireplace?"

"No, no, I don't boil kettles. When I want a cup of tea I usually go to Matron's room. She often makes tea at 5 o'clock, and..."

"Excuse me, Wilkins, but this is not the moment to talk about tea. Somebody is up on the roof. I think you must go and see who it is."

"Yes, yes, of course," said Mr Wilkins and hurried out of the room.

When he left the room Mr Pemberton looked at the fireplace again. But he did not see the hood there.

"Now, I wonder what is going on up there," he said to himself.

* * *

When Jennings and Darbishire came out onto the roof they saw not one, but more than twenty chimneys.

"Do you know which is Mr Wilkins' one?" asked Jennings.

"No, I don't," answered Darbishire. "But I think Mr Wilkins has already lit his fire. So his chimney must be one of those with smoke."

"Don't be silly, Darbi. If he has lit the fire, the smoke won't come out. It will go into his room. Let's listen at the chimneys without smoke and see if we can hear any coughing."

They listened at every chimney without smoke but could not hear any coughing. At last Jennings chose a chimney and dropped the hook down.

"It's either this one or the next," he said, "because Mr Wilkins' window looks... Oh, Darbi! There is something on the hook."

"Can you take it up?"

"I don't know. I think I can." Jennings pulled the string. "I've got it," he cried. "I've got it!"

Darbishire began to dance. But he stopped when he saw that it was not the parcel, but a bird's nest.

"Wrong chimney," said Jennings and went to another chimney.

He dropped the hook again and began to swing it.

"Wrong chimney again," said Jennings. "It's empty: I can swing the hook from side to side. Look, Darbi."

"How can I see what is going on down the chimney" asked Darbishire.

Of course, Darbishire could not see it, but Mr Wilkins could. It was at that moment that Mr Wilkins saw the hook.

Jennings pulled the hook out. "I'll look down every chimney now," he thought. "If there is nothing in the chimney I'll see the light from the fireplace." He put his face to the chimney and looked down.

"What are you doing?" asked Darbishire.

"I'm looking down the chimney. I want to see the light," , answered Jennings. But Darbishire did not hear the answer because it went straight down the chimney. It was Matron's room. She was making tea when she heard a voice in the chimney. She started and the cup of tea danced in her hands.

"I can't see anything," Jennings said.

"I can," said Darbishire. "I can see Mr Wilkins. He is coming from

the attic-window."

Chapter Ten
All's well that ends well, but...

"I... I... What the..." Mr Wilkins could not say a word. He was very angry. "What are you two silly boys doing up here on the roof? You know very well that you are not to come here."

"Yes, sir."

The boys stood unhappily before him.

"I'm sorry, sir," Jennings said at last, "but we were not sure which was your chimney, sir."

"But you - you silly little boy, why do you want to put things down any chimney? You're not Father Christmas, are you?"

"No, sir, I am not Father Christmas, sir. We wanted to see of your chimney was blocked or not. Because if you decide to light your fire..."

"But why did you think that my chimney was blocked?"

"They sometimes are blocked, sir. And we were quite right, because we found this thing in your chimney, sir." Jennings pointed to the bird's nest.

Mr Wilkins looked at the bird's nest. Of course, it was an unpleasant thing to have in the chimney.

"Hm... hm..." said Mr Wilkins. Maybe the little boys wanted to do something good. But school rules are school rules, and the boys mustn't break them even if they want to do something good.

"You must leave the roof at once," said Mr Wilkins. "And when you've washed your face, Jennings, I'll give you and your friend some work so that you'll have no time to put things down anybody's chimneys."

The boys went back through the attic-window and hurried to the wash-room where Jennings washed his face.

"I still can't understand it, Darbi," he said. "If that hook went down Old Wilkie's chimney, why didn't it hit the parcel?"

"It's one of those things that nobody can explain," said Darbishire, "like flying saucers, for example."

When the boys left the wash-room they met Venables who was going there to wash his hands before tea.

"Where have you been?" asked Venables. "I couldn't find you anywhere, I've done you a great favour."

"Thank you very much; that was very nice of you," said Darbishire. "What was it?"

"Well, Matron didn't let me play football this afternoon because she thought I was ill. So I decided to get that parcel of fish out of Old Wilkie's chimney."

"What!" exclaimed Jennings. "You mean that it was you who took it?"

"Of course it was! Didn't I tell you that it was an easy thing to do? I wanted to tell you about your parcel before, but I couldn't find you. Where have you been?"

"We've been up in the roof," said Darbishire.

"We tried to get the parcel through the chimney from above. We didn't know it had gone. And Old Wilkie caught us up there."

"I'm very sorry," said Venables. "I only wanted to help you."

"Never mind!" said Darbishire. "My father says all's well that ends well."

* * *

The tuck-box room was of course for pupils to keep their tuck-boxes in. It was not very easy to use the tuck-box room for an editorial office. But Jennings and Darbishire put tuck-boxed one on top another and the desk was ready.

On Friday some envelopes arrived, but the big cakes didn't. The two friends sat down at the desk made of tuck-boxes.

"We'll have to give the prizes tomorrow before tea," said Darbishire.

"Yes," said Jennings. "I can't think that is the matter with Aunt Angela. I wrote her a letter a week ago."

"You said she was absent-minded."

"She is. But I think this time she must remember because it is so important."

"I think absent-minded people must do something about it."

There was still half an hour before bedtime. So Jennings took the envelopes from his jacket pocket and passed them to his friend.

"See which are the poems and which are for the handwriting competition," said Jennings. "And we'll disqualify anybody who hasn't written 'Competition' in the top left-hand corner."

"Competition, competition, competition" read Darbishire. "Yes, they've all got it on... Oh, wait a minute; here's one that hasn't."

"Put it in the waste-paper basket," said Jennings. "We can't have boys who forget simple things, or they'll grow up absent-minded like Aunt Angela."

"But this letter is to your Aunt Angela. And what's more, it's in your handwriting."

"What?"

"Look. Miss Angela Birkinshaw."

Jennings opened the envelope and looked at the letter. He couldn't believe his eyes. It was his handwriting: '... please send two big cakes...'

"Oh, you silly! You forgot to post it."

"Don't be funny. How could you post it, if it's here!"

"No, I mean I can remember I meant to post it. Well, what are we going to do now?"

"I don't think the village shop has big cakes, but if we get permission to go to town, we can get them there," said Darbishire.

"And where can we get the money? I've spent all my money on another film for the camera. How much do you have?"

"One-and-fourpence. We can pay the bus fares but we won't have any money when we get to town."

"We'll think of something!" said Jennings. "Let's look at the poems and best handwriting. Maybe they are so bad that we shan't have to give any prizes."

There were six envelopes. Darbishire took the sheets of paper out of the envelopes and dropped the envelopes in the waste-paper basket. To his surprise all six were poems.

"Nobody has sent in his best handwriting," he said.

"Well, that's a good thing," said Jennings. "It means that we need only one cake."

"But where shall we get this one cake?"

"Let's not think about that now. Let's see whether the poems are good or not."

The boys began to read the poems and did not like them. All the five poems that they had in front of them on their desk were very poor.

"That only leaves one more. And I hope it's poor too," said Jennings.

Darbishire looked at the handwriting on the last sheet of paper and said: "This one is Venables'. Listen!"

'Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me!

O well for the fisherman's boy,
That he shouts with his sister at play!
O well for the sailor lad,
That he sings in his boat on the bay!'

"That's not bad, is it!" said Jennings. "Who did you say wrote it?"

"Venables."

"Don't be funny. Venables couldn't write that."

"I'm sure it's Venables' handwriting. But wait a minute. It's only half of a poem."

"It's quite enough. His poem is certainly a lot better than others," said Jennings.

"We'll have to give him a prize, if we can't find that something is wrong with it," said Darbishire.

"There must be something wrong with it." Jennings looked at the sheet of paper. "Look, Darbi. I don't think it is very good when he repeats all the time 'O well'. He says, 'O well for the fisherman's boy' and 'O well for the sailor lad.' People don't say that, do they?"

"Maybe he couldn't think of anything better. But we can't disqualify him for it, can we?"

"No, we can't. we must think of something else for a prize. Oh well, let's think.."

"There you are," said Darbishire quickly. "You've said it."

"Said what?"

"'Oh well.' You said people didn't say that."

At that moment the dormitory bell rang and the boys went to bed.

Chapter Eleven
How to get a big cake

When Jennings and Darbishire were takings off their clothes in the dormitory that evenings, the boy who took part in the competitions came up to them.

"Have you already read those poems?" asked Bromwich.

"Yes, there was only one good poem," answered Jennings.

"Mine?" asked Bromwich.

"No. Yours went into the waste-paper basket."

"Oh!" exclaimed Bromwich. "I've spent a lot of time on that poem."

"And mine?" asked Temple.

"Yours was very poor, too," said Jennings. "I don't want to tell you who is the winner, because it's still a secret, but if you keep it I'll tell you that Venables' poem is the best."

"Good old Venables!" cried Temple.

"Hey, Venables, you've taken the first prize in the wall-newspaper competition!" cried Atkinson.

Venables was washing his face at the washbasin. He turned his head.

"Have I?" he exclaimed. He quickly dried his face on the towel and came up to Darbishire and Jennings.

"When shall I get the cake?" asked Venables.

Jennings began to take off his shoes. He "did not hear" the question.

"When shall I get the cake?" Venables repeated.

"You see," said Jennings. "We don't have the cakes yet."

"What!" exclaimed Venables. "But you've promised it!"

"Yes, you've promised a big cake. And there must be a big cake," said Atkinson.

"If I don't get my prize, I'll..."

"All right, all right! Don't get angry. You'll get your prize," said Jennings.

"The big cake?" asked Venables.

"No, something ten times better."

"Ten times better? What?"

"It's a secret. You will know tomorrow, and I'm sure you'll like it."

At that moment Jennings did not know anything about the prize himself. But what could he say? There was no other way open to him.

When all the boys went to their beds Darbishire said to Jennings:

"It's a good thing you've thought of something, Jen. What is it?"

"I don't know yet."

"But you said...you said we could give him something ten times better than a big cake. What shall we give him?.. Can't we sell something and buy something else for the money?"

"I'm not going to say good-bye to my camera or my printing set, thank you very much."

"No, I mean some old thing that costs a lot because it's old. You'll be surprised to know how much old things sometimes cost. My father knows a man who has a book which was published at the time of Julius Caesar, and he says it costs a hundred pounds."

"Who says - Julius Caesar?"

"No, you silly! My father says. It's a rare first edition, you see."

"But I don't have anything that was published at the time of Julius Caesar. Maybe my Latin textbook."

"Oh, no. I'm talking about some first editions that people buy when they are a hundred years old."

"I don't think my Latin textbook is younger than a hundred," Jennings said with a smile. "And I remember the words 'first edition' on the first page of the book. There are only two books in school like it - Venables' and mine. All the other boys have much newer books."

"Don't be silly, Jennings! You are not going to tell me that your Latin book is valuable."

Jennings decided to see for himself. There were still some minutes before the lights were put out. He got out of bed, hurried out of the dormitory, went to his desk in the classroom and found the book. He opened it and read: A First Latin Grammar by A. Grimshaw. First Edition MCMLXII (1962).

Jennings tried to translate Roman numerals. "That must be... Yes, of course: 1852!"

He took the book and hurried out of the classroom. "First I must find out if the book is valuable," he thought when he ran to the dormitory. "If it is valuable I'll sell it for - well, Darbishire says a hundred pounds - for ten shillings, maybe. So I'll have money to buy Venables his cake and I'll leave some money to buy a newer edition of the book." He read the price: four-and-sixpence. "What will Mr Penberton say if I come into class without my Latin Grammar? So I will have to buy a newer edition of the book."

He was near the door of the dormitory when he heard a voice.

"Come here, Jennings." It was the Headmaster.

It was too late to hide the Latin book.

"Do you know, Jennings, that your dormitory light were put out five minutes ago?"

Jennings said something, which could mean "Yes-sir" or "No-sir"

"Then I don't understand, Jennings, why you are not in bed."

"I went to my classroom to get a book, sir."

"And how are you going to read it in the dark?" asked the Headmaster. But at that moment he looked at the book, which Jennings was holding, and his expression changed. "Grimshaw's Latin Grammar! Well, well, Jennings, I must say that I am surprised. Does this mean that you have at last decided to begin to learn Latin?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir. I... I... I was going to look through it before lights were out if there was time. Or maybe in the morning, before I get up, sir."

"Very good, Jennings. You have left it too late for this evening, but I think that there is no better thing than to read A Latin Grammar in the morning. It's a very valuable book."

"Yes, sir. Do you mean that it's a rare book, sir?"

"I mean that it's very difficult to get it. I ordered some copies many months ago, but I haven't yet got them," answered the Headmaster. "A very interesting man - Mr Grimshaw. I attended his lectures at the university."

Jennings opened his eyes wide in surprise. "You... you've seen him, sir?"

"Very often."

"Mr Grimshaw must be a hundred and fifty years old," THOUGHT Jennings. "No wonder he was interesting."

"It says here, sir," Jennings pointed to the first page, "that he wrote the book in 1852."

Mr Pemberton looked at the page.

"No, Jennings. MCMLXII is - well, try to read it yourself. Good night."

The Headmaster went away. "He is a good boy, that Jennings," he thought on the way to his room. "Of course it was silly of him to make a mistake of a hundred years when he was translating the Roman numerals. But after he knows his Latin grammar he will understand. No, he isn't a bad boy, that Jennings."

Jennings hurried into his dormitory. It was dark there. But Darbishire was not sleeping. He was waiting for his friend.

"Have you got it, Jen?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yes, you are quite right. The Headmaster says that it's a rare and valuable book."

"Did he say that?"

"He used other words, but that's what he meant. And I think it's very old because the author is dead."

"How do you know he is dead?"

"It says so in the book, it calls him a Late Lecturer."

"That's nothing. Maybe it means that he was usually late for his lectures."

"I'm sure it doesn't mean that," said Jennings. "I'm sure 'late' means 'dead' here."

"But how could a dead man write a book?"

"Well? Maybe he wasn't dead when he wrote it, but he is dead now."

"Maybe," said Darbishire.

"So first thing tomorrow we'll decide how we can get a lot of money for it."

But Darbishire did not answer. He was already sleeping.

Chapter Twelve
Jennings and Darbishire try to sell books

The next morning Jennings was sitting at his breakfast with a sad face. "There is no second-hand bookshop nearer then Dungambury," thought Jennings, "and Mr Carter will never give Darbishire and me permission to go so far. And if we can reach Dunhambury, shall we find a second-hand bookshop where we can sell the book for a hundred pounds or.. ten shillings?"

He was going to talk to Darbishire, when Venables spoke from the other side of the table.

"Don't forget my prize, Jennings. Remember, it has to be something good."

"Yes, what's it going to be?" asked Atkinson.

"I can't tell you yet," said Jennings, "because... well, because I haven't got it yet. But it's all right. I'm going to sell my Latin book and buy something for the money."

"Sell you Latin book!" The boys were surprised.

"Yes, it costs a lot of money, maybe a hundred pounds, because it's a rare first edition."

"But what will you use in class?" asked Temple.

"Oh, that's all right. The Headmaster won't know because I shall buy a newer edition."

* * *

There was no football game that Saturday and the boys could get permission to go to the village and buy sweets there at the little house that had a notice in the window. Home-made Cakes and Bicycles Repaired.

Jennings and Darbishire had other plans. But before they went out of the school yard they heard footsteps behind hem. They turned round and saw Venables. In his hand he carried his Grimshaw's Latin Grammar.

"Wait a minute," he said. "Are you going to Dunhambury?"

"Ssh! Don't speak so loudly!" said Jennings. "If Mr Carter knows that we are going so far there will be... I don't know what there will be."

"It's about these Latin books," Venables said in a whisper. "Mine is

a first edition too. So I wondered if you could take it with you."

"I don't advise you to sell yours," said Darbishire. "Jennings is selling his because he has to buy you a big cake."

"But I want to sell mine, too. Please, Jennings, take it," said Venables.

Jennings thought for a moment. If he could sell one book, he could sell two books at the same time.

"All right," he said.

"Thank you very much," smiled Venables. "But, please, buy a newer edition before you sell the old book. The Headmaster will be very angry if I haven't got a book for his class on Monday."

Jennings and Darbishire hurried to the bus stop. They had very little time. It was a long way to Dunhambury, and they had to be back at school by half past four.

For a quarter of an hour they waited at the bus stop. At last a bus came, and soon they arrived at Dunhambury.

For some time they could not find a bookshop. They saw all kinds of shops, but not a bookshop.

"There must be a bookshop in the town," Darbishire said.

"But, maybe these people have no time to read books," said Jennings.

"Shall we ask?"

"Whether they are too busy to read?"

"No, you silly! Shall we ask where a bookshop is?"

"Better not. Nobody must know that the pupils of Linbury Court Boarding School have come here to sell rare and valuable books, because..." Jennings stopped and looked at his friend. "Why do you still have your school cap on, Darbi?"

"I'm sorry," said Darbishire. He took off his school cap and put it in his pocket.

* * *

At last they saw a bookshop. There were a lot of old books in the shop window but it was so dusty that the boys could not read the titles of the books. In front of the shop there was a long table with many books in it.

"It's very risky to leave these books out in the street," Darbishire said, "if they are valuable first editions."

Jennings took a dust thick book from the table. "Poems by Alfred Tennyson," he read. "This book must cost a lot," he said. "It's very

thick."

"A hundred pounds?" asked Darbishire.

Jennings looked at the price. "No, nine pence. Maybe it's only a second edition. Let's go in, shall we!"

It was a dark little shop, and for a moment the boys thought it was empty: because Mr Barlow, the bookseller, looked like his books. His clothes were as dusty as the books on his shelves and he looked at the boys through spectacles which were as dusty as his window.

"Well?" he asked the boys. "What can I do for you?"

"Jennings handed him the two books that he carried.

"How much do these books cost?" he asked.

Mr Barlow took of his spectacles.

"Hm. Grimshaw's First Latin Grammar. Ah, yes, a very good book." He turned over some pages. When Mr Barlow began to turn the pages of the book Jennings closed his eyes. The pages were not very clean and all the pages were not there.

"A very good book," repeated Mr Barlow. "Very good condition. Beautiful binding."

"Oh, do you think so?" exclaimed Jennings. He turned to Darbishire. "Do you hear that, Darbi?" Then he turned back to the counter. "How much does it cost, please?"

Mr Barlow looked up at the ceiling.

"Let's say five shillings each," he said.

"Oh! Is that all?" exclaimed Jennings. That was much less than a hundred pound.

"You will not buy them for less than that," said the bookseller.

"Buy them! I don't want to buy them. I want to sell them," exclaimed Jennings.

"Didn't you take these books from that table near by shop?" asked Mr Barlow.

"Oh, no! We brought them with us. They are ours - they are!"

"How do I know that they are really yours? People often bring me in a book and I give them a good price for it, and all the time it's my own book that they have taken from the table outside."

"But they are really ours," repeated Jennings. "You must believe us."

There was something in Jennings' voice that made Mr Barlow believe the boys. He looked at the books again.

"These books aren't much good to me. The pages are not clean, and all the pages are not there."

"But a minute ago you said that the books were in a good condition."

"Oh, yes," said the bookseller, "but that was before I knew you wanted to sell them. Well, I'll give you three pence for each."

"Three pence!" exclaimed Jennings. He got very angry. "They cost five shillings each a minute ago when you thought we wanted to buy them."

Mr Barlow put on his spectacles.

"That's business, my boy," he said. "These old books don't cost... Oh, wait a moment! I think somebody has ordered Grimshaw's Latin Grammar."

He opened his order book. "Yes, I thought so! The Headmaster of Linbury Court Boarding School asked me to sent him any copies which I had."

The bookseller took the two books and put three sixpence on the counter.

"I'm giving you nine pence for each! That is much more than they really cost."

"Just think," Jennings said to Darbishire in a whisper. "The Headmaster will have to pay five shillings for the book which he thinks is in my desk."

"We can't take a hundred pounds for it," answered Darbishire.

"What are you talking about?" asked Mr Barlow.

"I... I don't want to sell the books I want them back," said Darbishire.

Now Mr Barlow did not want to give them back.

"You will not get a better price for them," he said. "Well, I'll give you one shilling and nine for the two of them. All right?"

"No, thank you very much. They are not for sale," said Jennings.

"Not for sale! What do you mean - not for sale? You've said you came here to sell them!" cried the bookseller.

"Yes, I know, but now quite suddenly I've decided not to sell them."

Mr Barlow put the books back on the counter.

"You are two silly boys who don't know whether you want to buy books or sell them," the bookseller said angrily. "Get out of my shop, and take your books with you!"

The boys were only too happy to go!

Chapter Thirteen
Jennings gives the prize

Jennings and Darbishire went into the street.

"Just think, Jen. The headmaster takes the Latin book and finds your name on the first page," said Darbishire and leaned on Mr Barlow's table. When he did it a pile of books fell from the table.

"You are so clumsy, Darbi!" Jennings said angrily. "Now look what you've done!"

"I'm sorry, Jen. It was that clumsy table..."

"Quick; pick them up before the old man comes out of his shop!"

The boys picked the books up and put them back on the table. The last book, which Jennings was just going to put back on the table was Poems by Alfred Tennyson. The book had opened when it had fallen down and Jennings took his handkerchief from his pocket to clean the dust from the two open pages.

"I think it's all right now, so we'll put it..." He stopped and looked in surprise at the page in front of him.

"What's the matter?" asked Darbishire.

"I don't know."

"Listen to this on page one hundred and thirty-four of Alfred Tennyson's poems:

'Break, break, break,
On thy cold grey stones, O Sea!
And I would that my tongue could utter
The thoughts that arise in me!'

"It's a nice poem, isn't it?" said Darbishire. "You know, Jen, I think I've heard that poem somewhere before."

"I'm sure you have heard it," cried Jennings. "And I know when and where."

"That's right! Of course! It's Venables' poem."

"But it isn't! It's Tennyson's. It's in his book, and it means that it is his! You see what it means, Darbi? Venables never wrote this poem - he copied it from Alfred Tennyson! He tried to deceive us."

Jennings put the book back on the table and the boys hurried to the bus stop. The boys were very angry. Of course, they did not have to give a prize now, a prize, which they did not have. But it was very dishonest of Venables!

At the same time as Jennings and Darbishire were getting on the four-o'clock bus in the town of Dunhambury, Venables went into Mr

Carter's room.

"Please, sir, I'm back from the village, sir."

"All right, Venables. And if you are going to the common room, will you put up this notice on the notice-board?"

"Certainly, sir."

Venables took the sheet of paper and looked to it. "There will be on inspection of all textbooks at 5 p.m. this afternoon," it said.

"Why this interest in textbooks?" thought Venables. "And what if Jennings doesn't come back in time? And what if he sold out valuable first editions and couldn't buy any newer editions?"

"Why are we having an inspection, sir?" asked Venables.

"There's a shortage of Latin text books and the Headmaster wants to know how many pupils have on Latin textbooks."

A shortage of Latin textbooks!

"Is it difficult to get them, sir?"

"Very difficult."

"I see. Thank you, sir," said Venables and went out of Mr Carter's room. Why did he give Jennings his Latin textbook? He did not want to get any prize now. All he wanted was to get back his Latin textbook.

In the common room he found Temple and Atkinson. They were looking at the Form Three Times.

"When will they print the next issue?" said Temple.

"There is a lot of work in printing a wall newspaper, don't forget," said Atkinson. "I expect Jennings is waiting for some more news."

Venables came up to the notice-board and put up the notice which Temple and Atkinson read without any interest.

Venables told them the story of the Latin textbooks.

"And he was going to sell them and buy cheaper editions, and now we'll have this inspection," he finished.

"Don't worry. You'll get your second edition when Jennings comes back," said Temple.

"But I shan't. Mr Carter says you can't buy them, and maybe Jennings has already sold the old books before he finds out that there are no newer books."

"But Darbishire told you not to sell your Latin book. It's no good giving you good advice, Venables. It goes in one ear and out of the other."

"Well, let this be a lesson to you, Venables," said Temple. "And your lesson will begin at 5 o'clock."

"And Jennings' lesson,' said Venables. "And I'll tell him something. Just wait till he comes back. Just wait!"

They waited for twenty minutes. Then the common room door opened and Jennings and Darbishire stood in the doorway.

"So there you are, Venables!" began Jennings. "I'm telling you, you are a liar."

"It's a good thing you've come back, Jen," said Venables. "Quick, have you got my Latin book?"

"Never mind Latin books! You are a thief!" Jennings waved a sheet of paper, which he had taken from the tuck-box room on his way to the common room. "You see this, Venables, with Break, Break, Break on it?"

"Yes, I do," answered Venables.

"Did you write this?"

"Of course I did," answered Venables. "I wrote it and sent it in for the competition."

"Well, you didn't write it. It was Alfred Tennyson," exclaimed Jennings.

Venables looked at Jennings in surprise.

"Do you think I don't know my own handwriting?"

There were already many boys in the common room, and Darbishire began to explain.

"Now, listen," he said. "We know it's Venables' handwriting, but we've found out that he didn't write the poem himself. He copied it out of Alfred Tennyson's book. Well, what do you say about that, Venables?"

"But I didn't send it in for the best poem competition," he said. "I sent it in for the best handwriting competition. The rules said you had to write twenty lines, so I copied this poem out of a book. I never said I wrote the poem myself."

Jennings opened his mouth. This, then was the explanation. What a fool he was!

"'Oh! Hm! Yes, I see... But how could we know which competition you meant? Why didn't you write it, well, on the other side of the page?"

"I couldn't do that. The rules said: 'Write on one side only,'" Venables explained. If you don't believe me, look at the envelope."

So all the boys went to the tuck-box room. In the waste-paper basket they found Venables' envelope with the words Handwriting Competition in the top left-hand corner.

"I'm sorry, Jen," said Darbishire. "I didn't see it."

"Yes, and when will you give him a prize? asked Temple. "You promised it before tea don't forget."

"The prize! Now we shall have to give him the prize, because his handwriting is really wonderful," thought Jennings. "But what?"

"Well, we were going to buy you a big cake with the money which we got for the Latin books, but..."

"Oh, I quite forgot about it!" exclaimed Venables. The book

inspection could begin at any moment, and Jennings was talking about the money he had for his book. "You can keep your big cakes, I don't want them! All I want is my Latin book back."

"Do you want it more than anything else?" asked Jennings with a hope.

"Yes, it's the only thing that I want; but if you've sold it, well..."

Jennings smiled and said loudly, "We are now going to give the Form Three Times best handwriting prize to the happy winner."

"I don't want a prize. I want my Latin textbook back," said the happy winner.

"We are not going to give him a big cake. We are going to give the winner something which he will like ten times better."

With these words Jennings took two copies of Grimshaw's Latin Grammar from his pocket and gave one of them to the winner.

"So you didn't sell it," exclaimed the winner who was really very happy now.

Chapter Fourteen
Darbishire the photographer

The next Monday during hobbies' hour Jennings and Darbishire were talking about the next issue of their wall newspaper.

"I don't think we'11 have any competitions this time," Darbishire said. "Not many boys take part in them. And we can't continue to give boys their own things back as prizes, can we?"

Then they decided to write about the foot-ball game against Bracebridge School. It was an "away" game and the next Saturday the Second Linbury Court School football team had to go to Bracebridge by bus and train.

Jennings was a very good player and took part in every game. Darbishire was a very bad player and never took part in football games. So Jennings decided to ask Mr Carter to take Darbishire as the photographer.

"I'm not sure that Mr Carter will let you go as photographer," Jennings said to Darbishire. "We've never had a photographer with us before. So I'll ask Mr Carter to take you as a linesman. And when you are a linesman you'11 certainly have time to take one or two photos."

Mr Carter agreed to take Darbishire as linesman, and for the next four days Jennings showed his friend how to use the camera. He also explained to him what he must do as a linesman.

Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins took the team to Bracebridge School. They went to Dunhambury Station by bus, and there they took train. The team was very happy to go to Bracebridge School not only because the Bracebridge team was going to give them a good game, but also because they usually gave them a good tea after the game.

At two o'clock in the afternoon they arrived at Bracebridge School. The team went to a dormitory to change. The linesman had nothing to change and Darbishire was shown into an empty classroom to wait for his friends. He sat down in the back row and began to look around the classroom.

Soon the door opened and a lot of Brace-bridge boys in grey suits came in. They looked at Darbishire in surprise.

"I've been told to wait here," Darbishire explained to a round-faced boy with large ears, who came and sat on the desk near him. "I'm Linbury linesman and photographer."

"Oh! Then I advise you to get out of here before Old Fox comes."

"Who is Old Fox?"

"You'll soon find out if you stay here."

Darbishire decided to leave the classroom quickly. He took his

camera and his flag and stood up.

"Sit down, that boy," he heard a voice and saw that a man with bushy eyebrows was sitting at the teacher's desk.

That was Old Fox! The teacher was looking at a book on his desk and did not see Darbishire. Darbishire decided to explain.

"Excuse me, sir..." he began.

"Don't talk, that boy!" The teacher was still looking at his book. "One more word from any boy, and you will all be back here this evening."

"But sir..."

"All right! You will all come back here after tea!"

Darbishire sat down and put up his hand. "Put that hand down!" said the teacher. He was still looking at his book, and did not see whose hand it was.

At that moment Darbishire heard a whistle from the football field. "The game has started," thought Darbishire. "And nobody has come to take me to the football field." Time passed and Darbishire knew that it was a detention class. He decided to ask the round-faced boy about it. But when he opened his mouth he heard: "Stop talking there in the back row!"

This time the teacher looked at Darbishire at last.

"I don't remember your face. May I ask you what you are doing here, boy?"

"Please, sir, I've come with the Linbury football team, and..."

"Too bad, too bad! Of course, it's very easy to get into my detention class, but it is very difficult to leave it. Are you sure you don't want to stay with us?"

"Yes, sir, I'm sure I don't want to stay here! Thank you, sir."

"All right, all right. And if you want to visit us we'll be very happy to see you any time you like. And now you may go."

Darbishire ran out of the classroom and hurried to the football field.

But it was too late. When Darbishire arrived the winning goal had already, been scored by Temple, and that was the only goal in the game.

It was a good, fast game, too fast for Darbishire to use the camera. Because when the ball was near his touchline he had no time to use the camera, and when the ball was on the other side of the field the players were far away.

Jennings found this out on the train going home and was very angry with his friend.

Darbishire tried not to look at Jennings. lie turned away and put his head out of the open window.

"There's notice for people like you over the door," said Atkinson.

"Can't you read?"

Darbishire looked at the notice, "It is Dangerous for Passengers to Put their Heads out of the Window," he read.

"I didn't put my heads out," he said. "I've only got one head to put out. That notice is nonsense. They had to say - No passenger must put his own head out."

"Very good!" said Bromwich. "That means that we can put somebody else's head out. Whose head shall we put out?"

"Darbishire's, of course,- he is only the linesman," said Atkinson.

Jennings decided to help his friend.

"What they meant to say is: All passengers' must not put his, her or its head out, respectively."

"You can't put your head out respectively," said Temple.

"Stop talking nonsense," said Mr Carter. "The train is coming into Dunhambury Station. Don't leave anything in the carriage. Have you got your gloves, Jennings?"

"I think so, sir. One is in my pocket, and the other is somewhere here, sir."

"Where are your football boots, Venables?"

"In my bag, sir. I wrapped them in my clean towel because they were very muddy, sir."

"What?" asked Mr Carter in surprise.

But at that moment the train stopped and Venables had no time to answer Mr Carter's question.

Mr Carter and the boys got out of one carriage, and Mr Wilkins and the other boys got out of the next.

"The bus to Linbury is leaving any minute," Mr Carter said to Mr Wilkins. "I'll hurry and ask the driver to wait and you, please, look after the boys."

"Come along, boys, come along," said Mr Wilkins in a voice that every football player of the Linbury team could hear very well.

Chapter Fifteen
Jennings loses and finds his glove

Jennings and Darbishire hurried to the bus stop behind all the other boys. Suddenly Jennings stopped. He dropped his bag and put his hands into his raincoat pockets.

"What's the matter?" asked Darbishire.

"My glove! I've lost it! I think I've left it in the train."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. I've got this glove in my pocket look, but I can't find the other one. Let's run back to the carriage and see if we can find it. We'll soon catch the others up, if we run."

The boys ran back to the carriage when Mr Wilkins with the other boys disappeared behind the station.

They could not find their carriage at once.

"It must be this one," said Darbishire, because it has that notice about passengers putting their heads out of the windows.

"They've all got these notices," said Jennings, "our carriage is much farther on."

At last they found their carriage. They lumped in and began to look for Jennings' glove. They found an old newspaper, a teacup, and a comb, but there was no sign of the glove.

"It must be somewhere here. Look!" said Jennings.

"I am looking, but I can't see your glove. Let's get off now. The train may start any minute."

And at that moment the train really started. Jennings and Darbishire ran to the carriage door. But it was too late. Jennings put his head out of the window and shouted for help.

"Nobody will hear you, Jen," said Darbishire. "And it's dangerous to put your head out: the notice says so."

Jennings came from the window and sat down.

"Don't worry, Darbi," he said. "We'll have to stay where we are. And when we arrive .it the next station we'll walk back."

"But how do we know the train is going lo stop at the next station? It may be an express."

"I'm sure it isn't an express," said Jennings. "Don't worry, Darbi. The trouble is that Mr Carter has got our tickets, so it will be difficult to leave the platform."

This time Darbishire really began to worry. Suddenly he looked at Jennings in surprise.

"I say, Jennings: there is your other glove look - on your hand!"

"No, it isn't. This is the glove I haven't lost."

"But it can't be. You said you had the other one in your pocket."

Jennings put his hand in his pocket and took out the other glove.

"Yes, you are right, Darbi. I was so busy when I was looking for the second glove* that I didn't see that I had it on all the time."

The train slowed down and the boys saw the station. Pottlewhistle Halt, they read.

"Let's get off quickly," said Darbishire.

It was a very small station. From the station an old porter came out and cried, "Pottlewhistle Halt."

But nobody else left the train. Jennings took Darbishire by the hand and the boys hid themselves behind large boxes that were standing on the platform. The porter did not see them, and as there was nobody else on the platform the porter went back into his room.

"He didn't see us," said Darbishire. "Let's go quickly, or it'll soon be dark."

"It's a wonderful adventure!" said Jennings.

"I think it's a dangerous adventure. It's more dangerous than to put your head out of the window. It's your fault we are here. So you must lead the way back."

Darbishire was right. It was all very well for him to speak, but the trouble was Jennings did not know which way to go.

Pottlewhistle Halt stood far from the nearest village. There was no bus stop near the station. People did not often use it, and' only the slowest trains stopped there. A country path led up the hill, and through a little wood.

"Let's go along this path," said Jennings. "I'm sure it will lead us to the Linbury Road after some miles."

"After some miles! Don't forget that I was running along the touchline for two hours. I think we must ask somebody if it's the right way or not."

"How can we? There's nobody here to ask."

"Ask the old porter - he's at home."

"Don't be silly, Darbi. It's a good thing lie didn't see us and couldn't ask us about our tickets. It could be more dangerous to ask him than to put 'your head out of the window."

So the boys went along the path which led up the hill.

When the five-o'clock bus from Dunham-bury left the town Mr Carter turned to Mr Wilkins who was sitting behind him.

"It's a good thing I ran and stopped the bus. There is not another bus for two hours," he said. "You counted the boys, didn't you?"

"Well... No, I didn't," said Mr Wilkins. "We were in a hurry - I didn't have time. Don't worry. Carter; they are all here. I'll count them now, if it can make you happier."

It was very easy to count, because all the boys of Linbury Court

School wore red-and white caps, and Mr Wilkins could see them all from where he sat - Venables and Aktinson were in the front row, Temple and Bromwich were behind them, then he saw Smith, Jones, Binns and Crosby, and in the back row were Armstrong and Wilson.

"That's strange! I can only see ten," said Mr Wilkins. "There must be one boy that I haven't counted."

"There must be two boys that you haven't counted," corrected Mr Carter. "Eleven in the team plus a linesman is... Linesman! Yes, of course, where are Jennings and Darbishire?"

Mr Wilkins looked surprised for a moment. Then he said, "They must be on bus, some-where. Maybe they are upstairs!"

"Upstairs! This is a single-decker bus, Wilkins."

"Sorry, I didn't notice."

"Well, really, Wilkins, why didn't you count them before?"

"All right, all right, all right!" Mr Wilkins was getting angry. He jumped to his feet and called loudly, "Put your hands up, everybody! I want to see who is here."

The Linbury boys put their hands up, and an old woman with a shopping bag put her hands up too: she was very frightened.

"Quickly, now. Put up your hands all the boys who are not here," shouted Mr Wilkins. "Well, I mean, has anybody seen Jennings and Darbishire?"

"Are you sure they are not here, sir?" asked Temple. ,

"Of course I'm sure," said Mr Wilkins. I "They didn't put up their hands when I asked those who were here to put them up and they didn't put up their hands when I asked those who were not here to... oh, shut up!"

Mr Wilkins wanted to do something at, once. He ran to the back door.

"I say, conductor, stop the bus!" he cried. "You are going the wrong way - I mean, I want to get off!"

"Please, Wilkins, come back to your seat," said Mr Carter calmly. "If we stop here on a country road two miles from the town and walk back it will already be dark, and I don't think we shall find the boys. Let's go back to school and telephone the station to see if they were still there." Mr Wilkins came back to his seat. "Maybe they left something on the train and went back to find it and the train took them to the next stop," guessed Mr Carter.

"And where is the next stop?" asked M Wilkins.

"It's only a local train. The next station is a little place which is called Pottlewhistle Halt."

Soon the bus stopped near the school. When the boys got off the two teachers went to the telephone in Mr Carter's room. They telephoned Dunhambury Station, but the man there could not tell

them anything about the two boys.

"I'll go and tell the Headmaster at once,' said Mr Carter, "and if you want to do some thing you can telephone the next station and see if they got off there."

"Yes, of course. I'll do it at once." And Mr Wilkins went to the telephone as the door closed behind Mr Carter.

Chapter Sixteen
A search-party for Jennings and Darbishire

"The next station," thought Mr Wilkins, "will be... What is the name that Carter told me in the bus? Whistlepottle Halt?... Pottlewhistle Halt? Or is it Haltpottle Whistle?" Mr Wilkins couldn't be sure.

"Well, it's either Whistlehalt Pottle or Pottlchalt Whistle," he said to himself and sat down with the receiver to his ear. "Hullo! Can you put me through to a station whose name is Whistlepott Horttle, please?.... What's that? There's no such place? Well, try Haltpottle Whistle, then... You can't find that place either?... Then try Haltwhistle Pottle... or Pittlewhostle Halt... Oh, you know what I mean?... Very good - that's more than I know."

A few moments later Mr Wilkins heard the voice of the old porter.

"Hullo, are you Whistlehalt Pott? Who is speaking? Whistlehalt Pott porter? Can you tell me whether the last train from Dunhambury stopped at Pottlewhistle Stop?... II stopped at Pottlewhistle Halt?... All right. Well, did you see if two boys in red-and-white school caps got off at the illation?"

"Yes," said the voice of the porter. "I really saw two boys. They walked from the station to the wood after the train had left. But the strange thing is that I'm sure they didn't get off the train."

"Thank you very much. Good-bye!" Mr Wilkins put down the receiver. "Well, now we know where they went. All we have to do now is to walk to the wood near Pottlewhatever-it-was, and meet them."

He hurried to the Headmaster's room where he found Mr Pemberton and Mr Carter.

"It's all right - I've found them," said Mr Wilkins. "I mean I know where they are."

"Did you speak to Pottlewhistle Halt?" asked Mr Carter.

"That's the name! Why didn't you tell me? Well, I spoke to the porter. He saw the boys walking to the wood."

"It's very dark now," said the Headmaster, "and the boys may lose their way... if they knew it. But they have never known the way from Pottlewhistle Halt to the school."

"I think if we have a search-party with torches and whistles, it will help us to find the boys," said Mr Carter.

"You are right," said the Headmaster.

Then the teachers decided that only the boys from the football team should be in the search-party.

"They are still in their outdoor shoes and raincoats," said Mr Carter, "and they know who we are looking for and they have already had their tea in Bracebridge School."

Five minutes later the ten football players were standing in the school yard.

"We are going towards Pottlewhistle Halt," Mr Carter said to them. "Jennings and Darbishire are coming from Pottlewhistle Halt. You must all keep together. You must be able to hear each other's whistles and see each other's torches. Now, have you all got torches?"

"I told them to go and take them," said Mr Wilkins, "because... Oh, I say. Carter, I haven't got a torch myself. I quite forgot to go and take one."

"If only Wilkins could stay at home!" thought Mr Carter. "With his help we may lose some other boys before we find Jennings and Darbishire."

But Mr Carter did not say so.

"Has any boy got a torch to give Mr Wilkins?" he asked.

"Yes, I have, sir," said Temple. "Here you are, sir; you can have this torch."

"Thank you," said Mr Wilkins. "Are you sure you don't want it yourself?

"Oh, no, sir, that's all right. I don't want it, sir,- it hasn't got a battery."

"I... I... But you, silly little boy, what can I do with it?"

"Let's go," said Mr Carter. "We have very little time. Let me count you."

Mr Carter switched on his torch and counted; ten boys plus two teachers.

"Let's go," he said and the search-party set out!

* * *

There was not one but many paths that lad to the road between Pottlewhistle Halt and Linbury. Jennings decided to take a short-ill, so the boys turned right, then left, then right again, and soon they understood that they were lost.

"How many miles do you think we have already walked?" asked Darbishire. "I'm tired."

"I don't really know. I think three or four," answered Jennings.

"Are you sure we are going the right way?"

"No, maybe we are walking round and round in circles," said Jennings. "It's so dark that I can't see anything. I can't see my hand in front of my face... Oh, Darbi! I've 1ost my glove again!"

"You couldn't lose your glove again. You have never really lost it."

Jennings turned and went back along the path. "It can't be very

far away from here, I remember I had them five minutes ago," he thought.

Darbishire went after him. "As we've lost our way, it doesn't matter which way we go," he thought.

At that moment they heard a whistle - three long whistles.

"I say, Darbi, did you hear a whistle?"

"That wasn't a whistle: that was a bird," Darbishire decided.

"But there were three of them!"

"All right then, there were three birds; or the same bird whistled three times."

"Oh, don't talk! Listen, there it is again!"

The whistles were nearer now.

"It's Mr Carter's referee whistle," said Jennings.

"How can it be?" exclaimed Darbishire. "You are hearing things."

"Of course I'm hearing things. I've heard Mr Carter's whistle."

"No, I mean you're hearing things that aren't there. Maybe it's a mirage. But as it's too dark to see, you hear it," explained Darbishire.

But some moments later the "mirage" was nearer. The boys heard the shouts and saw the light of torches. Then they heard Venables' voice, then Atkinson's, then... Mr Wilkins'!

"All the team's there," Jennings said in surprise. "What are they doing miles away from Linbury? Maybe they are looking for something too. I wonder what it can be!"

"I think they were late for the bus and are walking back to school," explained Darbishire.

"Maybe they also tried to take a short-cut and lost their way," said Jennings.

"Let's go and join them," said Darbishire happily.

"No, if we go and tell them our story Mr Wilkins will get very angry. Maybe they didn't notice that we were missing."

"That's right, but what shall we do, then?" asked Darbishire.

"We'll just join them, one at a time, and not say much. They won't notice in the dark. And when they find the way, we'll all come back to school. They will think that we have been with them all the time," Jennings explained his plan. "Go and join them, and I'll go after you."

Chapter Seventeen
Jennings finds his glove

When the search-party came to the hill Mr Wilkins cried, "Keep together, you boys or you'll lose each other. And if any of you thinks that he hears something... Be quiet Venables, when I'm talking."

"I was quiet, sir."

"Well, don't be quiet so loudly. It's very difficult to keep together in the dark with-out... Now, where's Mr Carter?"

"He is coming behind us. I heard his whistle a moment ago," said a voice in the dark-ness.

"Good! I'll give an answering whistle," said Mr Wilkins. "But... I think I've left my whistle at school."

"I can give you my whistle, sir," said an-other voice. "But it's a toy whistle - my aunt gave it to me last Christmas."

"Never mind who gave it to you, if it works," said Mr Wilkins and took the whistle.

At this time Mr Wilkins heard Mr Carter's three long whistles. Mr Wilkins decided to answer. He put the toy whistle to his lips and blew with all his strength. The boys around Mr Wilkins heard a thin peep-peep and laughed loudly.

"Be quiet and listen to me," Mr Wilkins said angrily. "When we come to the top of this hill, half of you will go with Mr Carter to Haltpottle Whistle (he still could not remember the name) and the other half will come with me to... Who's that boy walking there? I've asked you to stand still."

"I think it's Atkinson, sir," said Temple.

But it wasn't Atkinson. It was Darbishire who was joining the search-party at that moment.

"No, it's not me; I'm here, sir," Atkinson's voice said from the darkness.

Mr Wilkins tried to see who it was, but could not.

"I can't see who is here and who isn't. Stand still! I'm going to count you. "When he counted he pointed to each boy." One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven!"

Eleven!

"It can't be eleven. We had only ten when we left the school yard," thought Mr Wilkins.

Mr Carter arrived at the moment. Jennings followed him, and joined the search-party as Mr Wilkins turned to Mr Carter for help.

"I can't do anything with these boys, Carter! I'm trying to count them and they don't stand still."

"Another boy was lost?" asked Mr Carter.

"I don't think so," answered Mr Wilkins.

"The last time I counted there were eleven of them. I'm going to count again. Stand still, please".

Mr Wilkins began to count again. "One, two, three, four, five... I don't know whether I counted that boy over there. Is it you, Bromwich?"

"I don't know, sir; I can't see," answered Bromwich.

"You don't have to see, Bromo. You know if it's you, don't you?" said Venables.

"Oh yes, this is me, but I don't know whether you've counted me, sir," Bromwich explained.

Mr Wilkins began to count again.

"One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve!"

Twelve!

Well, certainly somebody has moved twice, or two boys have moved once," thought Mr Wilkins. "But as there are now more boys I'm sure no boy is lost, and we can continue to look for Jennings and Darbishire."

The search-party moved slowly up the hill. They were looking for Jennings and Darbishire.

That was not very easy because it was very dark. But they did not look behind them. If they had they could have seen the boys that they were looking for.

At the top of the hill they all stopped.

"I think this is the end of the path, Carter," said Mr Wilkins. "Now I wonder what lies over there."

"It's the way back to Pottlewhistle Halt, sir," said Jennings.

"Don't interrupt, boy, when I'm talking to Mr Carter, I've had enough of Whistlehalt Pott for one evening, and..."

Mr Wilkins stopped. He had recognized the voice from the darkness. He was sure

it was... But how could it be?

"Which boy spoke a moment ago?" he asked loudly.

"I did, sir," answered seven boys who were talking about how far cats could see in the dark.

"No, no, no - not you, boys! Somebody else I was sure..." He turned again to Mr Carter. "I say, Carter, I'm hearing things. Somebody spoke a minute ago and I'm sure

I was Jennings."

A loud shout came from the darkness.

"Qh, sir! Quick, sir! Come here, sir,- I've found something!"

"Who's that?"

"It's me, sir,-Temple. I've found a glove, sir."

At once somebody switched on his torch and Temple read, "Jennings;"

"I've found Jennings' glove!" he shouted.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the owner of the glove.

But nobody heard him because all the boys were very happy that Temple had found Jennings' glove. Now they knew that they were on the right track.

Mr Wilkins lost no time and said, "Let's shout together. Now! One, two, three..."

"JENNINGS!" shouted everybody. "

"Yes, sir?" said Jennings quickly. He was standing behind Mr Wilkins who was so surprised that he jumped up in the air.

"I... I... I... Who spoke? Who said 'Yes, sir'?"

'"Me, sir,- Jennings. I think you were calling me sir "

"But. but..." Mr Wilkins could hardly speak. "You are standing here in the middle of us!"

"Yes, sir. I wondered why you were shouting so loudly, sir."

For some time Mr Wilkins' lips continued to move, but nobody could hear what he was saying. All the boys were surprised too. They gathered round Jennings.

"I say, it's not really you, is it, Jen?" exclaimed Atkinson.

"Of course it's me. And Darbi is somewhere here, too. We've been here for some time"

"Why didn't you say so before?" asked Temple.

"Well, nobody asked me before," explained Jennings.

"If you want to know what I think, you're not supposed to be here because you are lost, and we are looking for you," said Bromwich.

Mr Carter called Jennings and Darbishire, and they told him their story.

"Well, I'm happy we've found you at last," said Mr Carter.

"I'm happy too, sir, because I've found my glove. Matron is very angry when I lose my things."

"I... I... Really, Carter, it's too much!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "People may think that we have nothing better to do all night than go in the dark..."

"Never mind, Wilkins; we can go back home now," said Mr Carter.

"Yes, yes, yes, I know. Carter, but, listen, we were looking for two silly little boys who were looking for a silly little glove!"

"It's a nice glove," Jennings said to himself and put it on.

Chapter Eighteen
Let's be decent to old Wilkie

It was late when the search-party got back to Linbury Court.

Jennings and Darbishire had to go to the Headmaster's study where for twenty minutes they had a very unpleasant conversation with Mr Pemberton.

"You will not go with the school team to an 'away' match again this term," the Headmaster said at the end of the conversation.

"It's not so bad for you because you are not in the team," Jennings said to Darbishire when they came to the dormitory, "but there are four more matches during this term; and some of these schools give wonderful tea after the game."

"Never mind," said Darbishire. "You'll have more time for our wall newspaper. The next issue must be ready very soon, now."

"With a nice photo of the winning goal in the Bracebridge match, I think!" said Jennings with a smile. "You were a wonderful photographer, Darbi. You came when the game was half over, and didn't take any photos."

"But we can write about the search-party," said Darbishire. "Jennings and Darbishire Find Search-Party! That will be a nice title, won't it? Or Search-Party Finds Jennings' Glove."

Darbishire decided to write the titles in his exercise-book, but at that moment Mr Carter put out the dormitory light. Darbishire was only too happy - he wanted to sleep. And in the next bed Jennings, who did not want to sleep, was thinking about... yes, he was thinking about Mr Wilkins. "We must really be decent to Old Wilkie," he thought. "He is not bad, after all. That search-party was certainly too much for him. I'll try to work well during his lessons," he decided.

"Darby," Jennings said suddenly.

"Oh! Shut up!" came from the next bed. "I'm sleeping."

"You are not sleeping. You can't talk when you are sleeping. Listen! You know we were wondering what we could write about in the next number of the Form Three Times?"

"A fine time to wake me up!"

"Yes, but listen! What will you think if I write some life-stories of famous people like Julius Caesar or Charles Dickens, for example?"

"I'll think it strange."

"Yes, but that's not all. I think it will make Old Wilkie happy."

"Why do you think he will want to read, about Charles Dickens?" asked Darbishire in surprise.

"No, you silly! We'll write about Old Wilkie In our Famous Lives,

and maybe of other teachers too. We must really be decent to Old Wilkie."

"Let's talk about it tomorrow, Jen. I am really sleeping already."

* * *

During the next four days Jennings and Darbishire did all they could to be decent to Mr Wilkins. They tried to mend his pen (it was not their fault that they could not do it), they woke him up early in the morning to show him Darbishire's new drawing, they once opened the door for him - they did it so quickly that Mr Wilkins nearly fell.

"I think he will be happier when he sees, his life-story in the Form Three Times," Darbishire said to Jennings when they waited for Mr Wilkins to arrive for an algebra lesson a week later. "Are you writing those famous life-stories?"

"I've already written Juluis Caesar's lifestory," answered Jennings, "but there wasn't much to say about Charles Dickens, so I am going to write Mr Carter's life-story to fill up the space. Mr Wilkins' life-story is the most difficult one: I can't find out how old he is or what his first name is."

At that moment they heard Mr Wilkins' footsteps in the corridor. The door opened, and Mr Wilkins came into the classroom.

"Good morning, sir," said Form Three.

"Good morning," said Mr Wilkins. "I am going to show you a new sort of problem during this lesson. So sit up straight and try to understand."

Form Three sat up straight, but to try to understand Mr Wilkins was another thing, because it was not easy to understand when Mr Wilkins explained about new problems. There was one problem about the man who walked at the strange speed of x miles an hour for the strange time of y hours.

"I've never seen a clock with y's on its face," Jennings whispered to Darbishire. "Maybe Mr Wilkins will be interested to know about it."

And Jennings told him so. Other boys asked Mr Wilkins questions which he thought were very silly too.

When he finished his explanation he said, "Now we'll see how much you've understood. Try to work out the next problem for yourselves."

He wrote the next problem on the blackboard and sat down at the .teacher's desk. The problem was about a walk from one milestone to

the next and there were some x's and y's in it too.

"Do we have to work it out in our exercise books, sir?" asked Atkinson.

"Of course. You don't think I want you to write it on the desks, do you?" came the angry reply.

Temple put up his hand.

"Please, sir, we can't find the answer to this problem, sir. You haven't told us how far it is from one milestone to the next. And before we know that we can't work it out, can we, sir?"

"I'm sure, Temple, you must know how far it is from one milestone to the next mile-stone. It can't be more than one mile, can it?" said Mr Wilkins and left his desk. "Well, Bromwich, have you worked out how much time it will take?"

"Yes, sir, three days, sir."

"Three days to go a mile! Don't be funny, you silly little boy. A snail can do it in that time!"

"I thought it was a snail, sir. The problem doesn't say it has to be a man. So I thought, it could be a snail."

"Well, well, Bromwich... Darbishire! I think you have worked it out, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have, sir. I used a man, sir, and I worked it out quickly. He must finish his trip at half past z, sir."

Mr Wilkins clasped his hands over his eyes and sat down at the desk.

"Please put your hands up all boys who have written down 'twenty minutes' for the answer," he said loudly.

Nobody put up his hand.

"Not one right answer to an easy problem!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "Very well. You all must come here at a quarter past four on Saturday and we'll have some more examples."

The boys were certainly not happy when they heard the news. Bromwich turned to Jennings and Darbishire.

"The first team will play a 'home' match on Saturday," he said. "When the game is over at half past three then it's the time we can go to the village. I think Old Wilkie has purposely chosen this time for his detention class, because we won't have enough time to go to the village and to come back."

"You mean we shall have enough time to go to the village and come back, because it takes us ten minutes to walk each way. But we won't have any time to spend in o the village, will we?" said Jennings.

Jennings didn't want to go to the village this Saturday because he had no money. He decided to finish his life-stories for the next issue of the wall newspaper which he wanted to hang on the notice-board the following Tuesday.

The algebra lesson ended when the bell rang for break, and Mr Wilkins went to the staff room for a cup of tea.

Chapter Nineteen
Jennings' famous people

"I've had enough of that Form Three," Mr Wilkins said to Mr Carter when he went into the staff room after his algebra lesson. "I gave them an easy problem this morning, and nobody could give me the right answer. Well, I'm going to make them come to the classroom on Saturday afternoon, believe me!"

"Don't worry, Wilkins," said Mr Carter. "Here is a letter for you."

Mr Wilkins took the envelope, looked at it, and saw L. P. Wilkins in his sister's handwriting. Mr Wilkins began to worry because his younger sister Margaret was usually too busy at her London hospital where she worked as a nurse. She did not often write letters to him. He loved his sister, which was not surprising, because she was a very nice young lady. He opened the envelope and read:

Dear Lancelot,

I shall spend next week-end with my friends not far from Dunhambury. So I think I can visit you for an hour at tea-time on Saturday. I shall take a bus from Dunham-bury to Linbury,- but don't meet me; I think I can find my own way.

With love,

Margaret.

Mr Wilkins put the letter back in the envelope as one of the other teachers came into the staff room. Nobody except the Headmaster and Mr Carter knew that his first name was Lancelot. Nothing was wrong with Lancelot: it was a nice name for the right man, but Mr Wilkins thought that he was not the right man. He would have made no secret of it if his name had been Bill or Jack or Tom. But Lancelot... oh, no!

Mr Wilkins came up to the notice-board and saw that Mr Carter was on duty on Saturday afternoon and evening. "That's fine," he thought. "The detention class will be over at a quarter past five, and I'll be free."

He finished his tea, and when he heard a knock at the door some minutes before the end of break there was only Mr Carter and himself in the staff room.

"Come in!" called Mr Wilkins.

The visitor was Jennings.

"It's about our wall newspaper, sir," he said to Mr Carter and explained. "I'm writing the lives of famous people like Charles Dickens, sir. But we think the boys may not be very interested in reading about them. So we are going to write about some infamous people too - like you and Mr Wilkins, sir... or... I mean people who are

not so famous as Charles Dickens, but are more interesting to read about."

"Go on," said Mr Carter with a smile. "Well, sir, teachers never tell people what they were like when they were at school, and I think, sir, these are the things which will be most interesting to read in a wall newspaper."

"No, I don't remember anything from my school years which you could put in your wall newspaper, thank you very much," said Mr Wilkins.

"I see, sir," said Jennings. "Well, sir, maybe we will write something about you if we know what your initials stand for, sir."

"My name, little boy, is L. P. Wilkins," said Mr Wilkins angrily. "And what L. P. stands for is not your business."

"No, sir, of course not. I'm sorry, sir," said Jennings.

Then he decided to ask Mr Carter some question. Mr Carter did not make a secret of his first name. Jennings knew that Mr Carter's first name was Michael. He decided to ask Mr Carter how old he was. He knew that it was a difficult thing because grown-ups often gave very strange answers, like a hundred and six last birthday.

"Do you remember the first car, sir?" Jennings asked Mr Carter.

Mr Carter thought for a moment, then smiled and said, "I see, Jennings. You want to know how old I am. Mr Wilkins told me that Form Three couldn't work out easy problems. So try to work this out. Five years ago I was twice as old as you will be in four years, and in ten years I shall be five times older than you were two years ago."

"Oh, sir, this is worse than the problem about the man who walked at x miles an hour, sir," said Jennings.

"Don't you have anything better to do than ask us a lot of silly questions?" said Mr Wilkins.

"I'm sorry, sir," said Jennings and left the staff room.

"It's very difficult to make Mr Wilkins happy," thought Jennings when he heard the bell for the next lesson. When he came into the classroom Darbishire asked him, "Do you know anything about them now?"

"Nothing," answered Jennings. "I can only I say that Mr Carter is a man whose age is a problem for clever schoolboys "

"And what about Old Wilkie?"

"He's worse. He doesn't want to talk about his school years."

They sat down at their desks and opened their exercise-books for the Headmaster's Latin lesson. When they were waiting for Mr Pemberton Jennings wrote the list of the famous and not so famous:

J. Caesar
Ch. Dickens
Mr M. Carter

Mr L. P. Wilkins
The late A. Grimshaw.

Chapter Twenty
Venables treats Jennings and Darbishire

It was after dinner on Friday. Jennings and Darbishire were sitting in the common room when Venables ran in.

"You're the people I'm looking for," he began. "I've decided to do you a favour because you were very decent to me last week."

The very decent boys were surprised. "Were we, really?" asked Jennings.

"Oh, yes!" answered Venables. "I haven't forgotten how you gave me my Latin book as a prize last week."

"'Oh, forget it," said Darbishire.

"All right, all right! I've received a ten-shilling note from my uncle, and in his letter he asks me not to spend it on selfish pleasure. So I ask myself what can be better than to invite two friends to Home-made Cakes and Bicycles Repaired to have some a doughnuts and lemonade on Saturday afternoon."

"Oh, thank you very much, Venables," said Darbishire happily,

"Wait a minute," said Jennings. "We'll all have Old Wilkie's detention lesson at a quarter past four tomorrow."

"Oh, I've forgotten about it," exclaimed Venables.

"But we can go next week, can't' we?" said Darbishire.

"A week is a long time," said Jennings. "Let's go tomorrow. We'll have a lot of time if we go after the football match is over at half past three. It'll take us ten minutes to go each way, and we'll have twenty minutes for doughnuts and lemonade. That will be enough, won't it?"

"All right, then; we'll do that," said Venables. "But we must be very quick."

* * *

On Saturday morning the weather was cold and it was raining. But by the time the first football team was playing the match the sun was already shining brightly.

The game ended at half past three, and three minutes later Jennings, Darbishire and Venables were hurrying along the village street to where a notice in a small house window t said: Home-made Cakes and Bicycles Repaired.

"Here we are," said Venables and opened the garden gate.

There was nobody in the garden, and the boys went into a small sitting-room of the house. There were usually not many visitors there

and when they came they sat down at the little table on very old and shaky chairs.

"Sit down, boys," Venables invited his friends, and the three boys sat down at the table. "I have ten shillings, so you can ask for anything you like - except a home-made bicycle."

Mrs Lumly, the owner of -the shop, came out of the kitchen to see her first visitors of the day.

"Yes?" she asked.

"A plate of home-made cakes and doughnuts and three bottles of lemonade, please," said Venables after a short conversation with Jennings and Darbishire.

Mrs Lumly slowly went out.

"I hope she will do it quickly; it's a quarter to four already."

Mrs Lumly had not hurried for the last forty years and did not want to do so now. She went slowly around the kitchen, washed some glasses, and saw if the cat's supper was ready. At last she came back to the sitting-room and put a plate with cakes and doughnuts and bottles on the table.

"Thank you very much," said the visitors and began their feast. The doughnuts and cakes were really wonderful.

"It will not cost more than ten shillings, will it?" asked Darbishire, with his mouth full of doughnuts.

"Oh, no! That'll be three shillings," said Mrs Lumly. "But don't pay now, boys. Enjoy it, and I'll be in the kitchen if you want more doughnuts and cakes." And she left the sitting-room.

For three minutes the boys did not speak - their mouths were too full of doughnuts and cakes to say a word. Then Jennings said, "Aren't these cakes and doughnuts wonderful!

I haven't eaten anything like them since I was young-well, I mean younger than I am now."

"Yes," said Darbishire, "it's very nice of you, Venables..." he suddenly stopped. "I say, Ven, what's the matter? Are you all right?"

"What's that? Oh, yes, I'm all right, thank you", said Venables. But the expression his face showed that he was not.

Jennings looked up from his plate, too.

"What's the matter, Venables? Are you all right?" he asked.

"I'm all right, thank you. I just suddenly thought..."

"Don't worry about the detention class," said Jennings. "If we leave the place in five minutes we shall have enough time to go back to school."

"It's not the detention class," answered Venables. "It was when you asked Mrs Lumly how much it all cost. I suddenly thought 'Gosh!'"

"Well?" Jennings said. "What happened after you thought 'Gosh!'?"

"Well, after I thought 'Gosh!', I thought again and then I thought

'Gosh!' I thought - I changed my jacket after dinner because Matron wanted to mend it."

"Yes?"

"Well... you see, I've left my ten-shilling note in my other jacket."

"What!"

"I'm very sorry and all that."

"That's awful!" exclaimed Jennings. "We've already had three cakes, two doughnuts and two bottles of lemonade, and we haven't got a penny to pay for it! Why do all these things always happen to us?"

"What shall we do?" asked Darbishire.

"Let's explain it to Mrs Lumly and ask to pay later," said Venables.

"No, she may not believe us," Jennings decided and turned to Venables. "You'll have to run to school faster than x miles an hour, Ven, and get that ten-shilling note from your other pocket. Darbi and I will sit here and eat these doughnuts as if nothing had happened."

"But it will take Venables twenty minutes to walk to school and come back," Darbishire looked at his watch. "It's one minute to four."

"You mustn't walk, Ven. Please, run quickly," said Jennings.

Venables did not say a word but stood up from the table and ran out of the room.

"Eat, Jennings, we mustn't let Mrs Lumly suspect anything."

"I wonder if Venables will come back with the money before we have finished the cakes and doughnuts , on the plate," said Jennings. "If he doesn't come we shall have to ask for more, because..." He stopped because the kitchen door opened and Mrs Lumly came into the sitting-room.

"I think I saw one of you in my garden," she said.

"Yes, it's our friend. He's gone out... for a little walk. He'll be back soon," Jennings explained.

Mrs Lumly looked at the now empty plate.

"Do you want some more doughnuts?" she asked.

"Well... yes... I think we'll have some more," said Jennings.

"All right, boys," said Mrs Lumly, and went to the kitchen, "But I don't want any more doughnuts," said Darbishire.

"I don't want them either, but what could I do?" said Jennings angrily.

Chapter Twenty-One
how many doughnuts and cakes can a boy eat?

When Venables was going to school from Linbury, Mr Wilkins was gathering Form Three for the detention class. He wanted to begin the lesson at a quarter past four sharp, or better some minutes earlier. "Margaret's letter doesn't say what time she is coming," he thought, "but I think she will arrive at about five o'clock."

Form Three also wanted to begin and finish the lesson as soon as possible.

They sat down at their desks. When Mr Wilkins came into the classroom he was surprised to see that three boys were absent.

"Why aren't all the boys present, when I'm in a hurry," he said.

"They've gone to the village," said Temple. "But they wanted to come back by a quarter past four."

"Well, I'm not going to wait for them all afternoon," Mr Wilkins said angrily. "Open your textbooks at page fourteen and read the example it gives." And Mr Wilkins went out of the classroom.

In the corridor he looked out of the window. He hoped to see the three boys coming from the village. No, they were not coming. But Mr Carter was. He was walking along the corridor, and Mr Wilkins had to stop him.

"You see, Carter," said Mr Wilkins, "my sister is coming this afternoon, and I want to finish this lesson before she arrives. If she comes before I'm free, will you please, take her to my room? She has not been here before, and she doesn't know where my room is."

"Certainly," answered Mr Carter. "I will look after your class if she arrives early."

"No, no. I think I'll finish the lesson at five o'clock... if only I can begin it. You see, three boys are absent from the lesson..."

Mr Wilkins stopped because he saw Venables who at that moment appeared in the corridor. He was running along the corridor to Matron's room to take his ten-shilling note.

"Here is one of them. He is in time." And Mr Wilkins called loudly: "Come along, Venables! Hurry up, boy! I'm waiting for you."

Venables' face was red, sweat dropped from his face, he was out of breath,- he could not speak.

"I'm glad you are hurrying to my lesson, Venables," said Mr Wilkins with a smile. "Run to the classroom and get your books and exercise-books out of your desk. I'm going to start now."

In a minute Venables found himself at his desk, and Mr Wilkins

began to explain what x's and y's meant. But Mr Wilkins was not very happy when he saw Venables put up his hand.

"What's the matter, Venables?" asked Mr Wilkins. . . :

"Please, sir, I can't come into class yet, sir," said Venables.

"What do you mean - you can't come in? You are here."

"I have to go to the village, sir."

"No, you don't have to go to the village again, Venables."

"But, sir, I must. I've left Jennings and Darbishire there," explained Venables.

"Well, I have something to tell them when they come," said Mr Wilkins.

"May I go and fetch them, sir? They'll never come back without me."

"I... I... Are you trying to be funny, boy? , They know their way back, don't they?"

"But, sir, you must listen, sir. You see what happened was..."

"Be quiet, Venables! I don't want to hear another word."

Mr Wilkins looked at Venables angrily. "I know all your tricks," he thought. "One of you wants to go and fetch the other two; and all the three of you want to miss half the detention class."

"But, sir! You don't understand. Listen to me, please!"

"Be quiet, boy!" shouted Mr Wilkins. "Do as I tell you, or it will be worse for all three of you!"

For the first ten minutes after Venables had gone Jennings and Darbishire continued to eat doughnuts. For the next five minutes they played with Mrs Lumly's cat. At a quarter past four they began to worry about how they could explain it all to Mr Wilkins.

But at twenty-eight minutes past four they understood that the greater trouble for them was Mrs Lumly: on the table there were a lot of plates and bottles for which they had to pay.

"Why doesn't Venables come!" exclaimed Darbishire for the fifth time in three minutes.

"If you ask me, he is a traitor," Jennings said angrily. "Wait till I see him again!"

They did not speak for some time, but looked at their watches.

"Have another doughnut, Jen? There's only one left," said Darbishire at last.

"No, I can't. I'll burst. I've had seven already and two bottles of lemonade."

"She is beginning to give us those strange looks again, Jen. Let's order some more doughnuts. We mustn't let her suspect anything, must we?"

"I know, I know!" said Jennings. "But I really will burst if we don't do something."

Mrs Lumly was really giving them strange looks. She was greatly surprised. "I've never seen boys who could eat so many doughnuts," she thought.

"Oh, she is coming back again. Try and look hungry!" Jennings whispered, when the kitchen door opened.

"I'm sorry, Jen, but I can't look hungry," Darbishire said sadly.

"Well, boys!" exclaimed Mrs Lumly when she saw only one doughnut on the plate. "You, boys, have an appetite! I don't think you must eat any more cakes, or you'll be ill. Let's see now, you've had fourteen cakes and doughnuts and five bottles of lemonade... that'll be nine-and-sixpence, please."

The time had come to explain and it was not easy.

"You see," Jennings began, "there was a... a... a mistake - by chance, of course. You see..."

"No, boys, there's no mistake," said Mrs Lumly. "It'll cost you nine shillings and sixpence, though where you've found room to put it all is more than I can understand..."

Suddenly Darbishire heard the click of the garden gate and he jumped from the chair. At last! Venables was coming back! Good old Venables! He leaned over the table and whispered the happy news in Jennings' ear. Good old Venables! He must be hungry: he must have something for the last sixpence of his uncle's present. Jennings turned to Mrs Lumly.

"Will you bring us a last plate of doughnuts for our friend, please?"

"But he has gone," said Mrs Lumly.

"Yes, but he has come back."

"All right," said Mrs Lumly and went to the kitchen.

Chapter Twenty-Two
A young lady helps Jennings and Darbishire

The door opened and Jennings and Darbishire jumped to their feet to greet their friend.

But... in the doorway they saw a pleasant young lady of twenty-five or twenty-six years old. She put her suitcase on the floor, smiled and said:

"May I join you at your table? I don't see where else I can sit."

"Oh, yes, please; that'll be all right," said Jennings.

"Not Venables!" whispered Darbishire. "It isn't Venables! What shall we do?"

"Be quiet, Darbi," whispered Jennings. "It's not polite." He turned back to the young lady and took the cat from the chair.

"I see you have enjoyed all this," said the young lady and pointed to the empty plates and bottles.

"Yes," said Jennings, "we couldn't do anything else but to eat and drink all this; if you understand what I mean."

The lady looked at the boys with interest, but the boys looked at her with no interest at all. They wanted to see Venables with his ten-shilling note in her place. They noticed that she was young and beautiful. They also noticed the initials M. W. on her suitcase, but this certainly did not tell them anything, because there was very little resemblance between Margaret Wilkins and her brother Lancelot.

Though Jennings and Darbishire noticed nothing unusual about Miss Wilkins, she could see that something was very much the matter with them. When Mrs Lumly came with another plate of doughnuts Miss Wilkins ordered a cup of tea for herself.

"You don't look very happy," she said to the boys. "Aren't you going to eat these doughnuts she has brought?"

"No, thank you," answered Jennings. "If I see another doughnut I'll burst."

"Something has happened, hasn't it?" she asked.

"Yes," said Darbishire sadly.

"Tell me what the matter is. Maybe I" can help you."

"It's very nice of you," answered Jennings, "but I don't think you can help us. There is only one person who can help us, and he's not here. He invited us to a feast and when. we were finishing the first plate of doughnuts and cakes he had to go and think Gosh!'"

"He had to go and. do what?" asked Miss Wilkins.

"Oh, he didn't really have to go anywhere to think it. He sat there where you are sitting now and thought it. And after he thought 'Gosh!'

once or twice, he slowly turned round and said, 'I've left the money in the other pocket.'"

"He didn't really turn round and tell us," said Darbishire, "because he was sitting in front of us all the time."

"Well, you know what I mean," said Jennings.

"Oh, yes, I do," answered Darbishire, "but maybe this lady doesn't. She may think that he looked out of the window and told us."

"I think I understand," said Miss Wilkins.

"Of course, it is not really all Venables' fault," said Jennings. "Because there is a detention class which we had to go to, and if Venables is there we shall have to eat these doughnuts for hours and hours - maybe all night."

"If you can't pay, maybe you'll let me pay for them," said Miss Wilkins.

"Oh, thank you very much," said Jennings. "But we can't take money from you. You are our guest: we invited you to sit at our table."

"When you come back to school and find your friend you can give me back the money," said Miss Wilkins.

"Well, all right, then; thank you very much. And we'll give back the money the minute we see Venables - if he is alive after Old Wilkie's detention class."

"Whose detention class?" asked Miss Wilkins in surprise.

"Old Wilkie's-Mr Wilkins'; he is one of our teachers; and when he is angry he is like a fire-breathing dragon."

"Really?" exclaimed Miss Wilkins.

She understood that the boy did not know that he was speaking with the fire-breathing dragon's sister.

"Yes, really," continued Jennings. "You just sit in one of his algebra lessons and then you'll believe it. I've met some frantic types in my life, but Old Wilkie!..."

Miss Wilkins was surprised. She knew that her brother was sometimes explosive, but a fire-breathing dragon, or a frantic type - no, that was more than she could accept.

She drank her tea quickly and said, "May I walk back to school with you?"

"Certainly! Then we can give you the money," said Darbishire. "But maybe we are taking you out of your way."

"Oh, no. I'm going to Linbury Court, but I wasn't sure of the way and got off the bus in the village, by mistake."

Darbishire looked at her in some surprise. Was she a parent? "Excuse me, but you are very young to be some boy's mother," he said politely.

"No, I'm not. I'm... I'm some boy's sister," said Miss Wilkins.

She called Mrs Lumly.

"Two pence for the tea and ten shillings for the rest," she said.

Miss Wilkins paid the money and said, "Let's take these doughnuts back to school for your friend."

Jennings and Darbishire did not really want to do it, but they did not want to argue with Miss Wilkins either. So they took the doughnuts for Venables, and all three of them went out of the house. Jennings was carrying Miss Wilkins' suitcase and Darbishire was carrying the doughnuts in a paper bag.

They thanked Miss Wilkins many times for her help, but now they were beginning to think about what was going to happen when they got back to school. It was already five o'clock!

Margaret saw that they were worrying and asked them questions about the more pleasant side of school life. They told her about the next issue of the Form Three Times, and they began to talk about Mr Wilkins again.

"I'm sure he is not really such a monster," said Margaret.

"Oh, but he is - he's worse!" exclaimed Darbishire. "He is not like the other teachers. Mr Carter is very decent; Mr Hind is very decent too; and even Mr Pemberton - he's the Headmaster! But Old Wilkie - no!"

"But what really is it that you don't like about him?" asked Margaret.

"Well, he sometimes shouts at us when we've done something wrong; and we don't mind that. But it is the same when we are trying to be decent. Take this, for example: Jennings wanted to write life-stories of famous and unfamous people, like Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins, for this newspaper that we told you about. You know - what they were like when they were young, and what their full names are."

"We know Mr Wilkins' initials are L. P., but what these initials stand for is a secret," said Jennings. "I don't think anybody really knows."

Margaret smiled. So Lancelot did not want to tell anybody about his romantic name!

"Of course, we didn't dare to ask him how old he was," Jennings continued. "He is not the man you can ask questions like this."

"And did Mr Carter tell you how old he was?"

"Well, no, he didn't, but we could work out a problem and find out," said Jennings.

Now they came to the school gates and Jennings said, "Let's say good-bye now. I'll tell Venables to bring that money to you, because I don't think we'll see you again before you go."

Margaret was sorry to hear it.

"But aren't we going to have a talk about your wall newspaper? Maybe I can help you with your life-stories."

The boys did not think that some boy's sister could really help them with their life-stories.

"I don't see how we can have a talk with you," said Jennings sadly. "Then, you see, we've missed the detention class."

"Is that serious?" asked Miss Wilkins.

"Is that serious! Old Wilkie will be so angry, that he'll - well, if you hear a great explosion in five minutes' time, you'll know that we are talking to him."

At that moment Mr Carter came out of the door and hurried to them.

"Good afternoon; my name is Carter," he said. "You must be Miss Wilkins."

"Yes," Margaret smiled.

"I'm happy you've found your way," said Mr Carter. "If you come with me, I'll take you up to your brother's room. I promised to meet you, because he has been busy with a detention class, but he'll be free in a moment."

Now Mr Carter noticed that Jennings and Darbishire were standing with red faces and open mouths. Mr Carter also noticed a strange expression on their faces.

"I think you haven't seen your brother for a long time, and you'll have a lot to talk to him about," Mr Carter said to Margaret.

"Yes, I really want to tell him a lot," said Miss Wilkins loudly.

Chapter Twenty-Three
Visitor for Mr Wilkins

If you once stepped under an ice-cold shower when thinking that it was hot, you will know something about what Jennings and Darbishire felt when they understood that their guest was Mr Wilkins' sister.

For a minute they didn't speak. When Mr Carter closed the door behind him Darbishire exclaimed:

"I can't believe it! I just cannot believe it! I just can't believe it! Old Wilkie's sister! No, I can't believe it!"

Jennings did not hear him. He was thinking about fire-breathing dragons and frantic types.

"Why didn't she tell us that she was his sister?" he exclaimed.

"If Old Wilkie was my brother I shouldn't be proud of it. What worries me is how we are going to talk to him now, when she's gone and told him all about it."

They went to the changing-room and left their caps and coats there. In the corridors they saw the boys of Form Three who were going to the school yard after the detention

"Where have you been?" Temple asked them. "Old Wilkie was so angry when you didn't - come that he nearly burst."

"Don't talk to me about bursting: I've just had seven doughnuts." Darbishire threw the paper bag into Temple's hands. "Here you are - eat these! We were going to give them to Venables, but I don't want to be decent to him now."

Through the window Jennings saw Venables who was hurrying from the school yard. Jennings shouted to him. Venables was greatly surprised to see his friends at school.

"Oh, there you are!" he shouted. "How did you get back? I was on my way to the village. I've got my ten-shilling note, now, look."

"You are a traitor, Venables," shouted Jennings. "You left us there without any money and we had to eat all those doughnuts and cakes."

"Yes, we had to eat doughnuts and cakes and they cost ten shillings," said Darbishire angrily.

"But I only meant to spend half of that, even when I was with you."

They argued for some time, but at last Jennings decided that it was time for them to go to Mr Wilkins. They left Venables and slowly, very slowly went to Mr Wilkins' room.

"I think she is sitting there, at this very moment, and telling Mr Wilkins what we said about him," said Darbishire.

Yes, at that very moment Miss Margaret Wilkins was sitting in the arm-chair in her brother's room with a cup of tea in her hand.

"It's very pleasant to be here," she said and put the cup on the table in front of her.

"Have another cup of tea, Margaret," said Mr Wilkins.

"No, thank you, Lancelot. I had a cup of tea before I arrived."

"If you don't mind, Margaret, don't call me Lancelot here."

"But why not? You've always been Lancelot at home."

"That was at home," explained Mr Wilkins. "But here, if the boys find it out, I'll never know a moment peace."

"What shall I call you then - Old Wilkie?"

"Y-yes, well, it's better than Lancelot. The boys call me that when they think that I am not listening."

Margaret watched him with interest. Was he really as bad as the boys thought?

"Have another cup of tea!" invited the fire-breathing dragon.

"No, thank you, Lance... er, Old Wilkie. I had a cup of tea in the village with two of your boys. Jennings and Darbishire they said their names were. I think they are very nice boys."

"What!" Mr Wilkins jumped to his feet and looked at his sister in surprise. "You... you mean... you want to tell me... Well, Margaret, they had to be in my detention class - not drinking tea with my sister. So that's where they were. Well, when I see them, I'll.."

"But it wasn't their fault! They were very sorry that they were missing your detention class, but they couldn't leave the place because they had no money."

"The only thing I can tell you, Margaret, is that they must be punished and they will be punished," said Mr Wilkins.

"Can I see them again before I go?" asked Margaret.

"Why do you want to do that?"

"I promised to help them with their wall newspaper," she explained. "You didn't help them when they wanted to write your life-story."

"No, I didn't. My life-story! I've never heard such nonsense. Well, they'll have to think about it again because I didn't tell them anything."

"That's why I want to see them. I can tell them a lot of interesting things," smiled Margaret. "Do you remember that time when you were very small and you had six helpings of Christmas pudding? I remember Father said to you, 'Lancelot, my boy, this is a good lesson to you never to...'"

"Oh, Margaret! You can never tell them a thing like that!" cried Mr Wilkins.

"Or do you remember the time when you fell down from the

apple-tree and cried

and..."

"But you know very well, Margaret, that it wasn't my fault. The branch was rotten - it let me down."

"It wasn't the boys'-fault that they didn't come to your detention class. Their friend let them down."

"It isn't the same thing, Margaret. You must understand that."

"But I can't understand that. It's exactly the same thing, one of those things which often happen to people when they are small," she argued. "And if you can't see it now, try to read about it in the life-story of Lancelot Wilkins, when you see it in the next issue of the Form Three Times!"

"I... I... But Margaret, you can't... you won't..." \

"I shall," said Margaret.

Mr Wilkins came up to the window and opened it. It was too much for him. He looked out of the window. The evening was cool and it calmed him. He began to remember the time when he was. a small boy. Maybe he had really behaved in the same idiotic way as Jennings and Darbishire. Maybe their friend really let them down and they could not come to the detention class. Then he thought about Lancelot Wilkins' life-story in the Form Three Times. Oh, no,

not that!

He turned back from the window and said, "I don't want to be unfair, Margaret, so I'll tell you what I'll do: I'll make them do the sums which they missed this afternoon, and I'll not punish them."

"That's fair enough," Margaret answered. "And you won't... Well, what I mean is, you won't say anything about Lancelot and all that apple-tree nonsense, will you?" • "No," said Margaret. "But you must promise that you will be very decent to them when they come to explain why they were absent from your detention class." "I will," said Mr Wilkins.

Chapter Twenty-Four
Margaret Wilkins helps the boys again

Soon Margaret and her brother heard footsteps in the corridor and then a knock at the door. "Come in!" called Mr Wilkins, and two boys with very sad faces came into the room.

"Please, sir, we've come to report you, sir."

"Yes, of course! Come in, Jennings and Darbishire. Well, well! You... you've met my sister, I think," Mr Wilkins looked at Margaret and smiled.

But the boys did not dare to look up- they were still looking at their shoes.

"I think you've come about that detention class that we had this afternoon," said Mr Wilkins and smiled again.

"We are very sorry we were absent, sir," said Jennings at last, "and for all we said, too, sir."

"Well, never mind! I'm also sorry you missed it! We learned a lot."

The two boys could not believe their ears. What was the matter with Mr Wilkins? They did not know how to explain their story to him, but he did not want any explanation and greeted them like film stars. No, they just could not believe it!

"I think the best thing will be if you come and see me before you go to bed and we'll do some of these sums together, shall we?"

"Yes, sir... certainly, sir. Thank you very much, sir," Darbishire said quickly.

"But... is that all, sir?" asked Jennings.

"Yes, that's all. Oh, yes, have something to eat before you go," said Mr Wilkins.

He smiled again and took the plate of cakes from the table. If he had to be decent, he decided to be really decent.

Cakes again! That was too much for Jennings and Darbishire.

"Oh, no, thank you very much, sir," said Jennings.

"Well, boy,- have a cake when I tell you to."

"But, sir, I can't, sir."

"Nonsense!" said Mr Wilkins. "Boys can always eat cakes. I remember when I was a boy - well, never mind,- have a cake!"

Margaret decided to help them.

"I think they've had enough doughnuts and cakes for one afternoon," she said.

Mr Wilkins put the plate back on the table.

"By the way, Jennings, I was going to help you with your wall newspaper, wasn't I?"

"Yes, you were, Miss Wilkins. But after I said, I thought - I mean - I didn't think..."

"But I'll be only too happy to help you. What can I tell you about my brother that will be interesting to you and your readers?"

Mr Wilkins looked at hi& sister in alarm.

"I say, Margaret, be fair! You promised..."

"Don't interrupt, dear, I'm trying to think... Oh, yes! Some years ago my brother..."

"Margaret... I... I... Don't do it..."

No, no, he couldn't believe that his own sister whom he loved so much, could let him down.

"Well, some years ago, Jennings, when my brother was at the University, he rowed in the Cambridge crew that won the Boat Race three times."

"Did he really!" exclaimed Darbishire.

What wonderful news!" exclaimed linings. "May I shake hands with you, sir?"

"Why didn't you tell us before, sir? You • not so unfamous as we thought, sir." Darbishire's eyes were shining behind his speckles.

"You'll be the hero of the school when the Form Three Times comes out," shouted Jennings.

"I'm sure you don't want to write in your newspaper about unimportant things like this," said Mr Wilkins.

"Oh, but it's just the thing we want for our newspaper. And I want to take a photo "I you and put it in the next issue of the I arm Three Times: Mr L. P. Wilkins, a member of the famous Cambridge crew." And then he suddenly asked, "What does L. P. stand for? We really must put your full name, don't you think, sir?"

At once Margaret saved the situation.

"All the members of the Cambridge crew knew my brother by his initials, Jennings, So it will be quite correct to write about him in the wall newspaper as L. P. Wilkins."

The happy boys said good-bye and left the room. But a moment later Jennings was back.

"Please, Miss Wilkins, I quite forgot to tell you about that ten shillings. Venables doesn't want to pay, because he says that he was going to spend only half of the money. But if you don't mind, Darbishire and I can send you sixpence every week for twenty weeks

"That's all right, Jennings, you can forget about it.

"Oh, but really, we can't let you..." Margaret stood up from her chair.

"You may know, Jennings, that the Wilkins family can be very severe. So if you don't stop talking nonsense about that ten shillings, I shall become a fire-breathing dragon of the must frantic type."

"Yes, Miss Wilkins... Thank you, Miss Wilkins," said Jennings, and leaving the room closed the door.

* * *

"What happened when you reported to Old Wilkie?" Venables asked Jennings and Darbishire at breakfast on Sunday morning.

"He helped us to do the sums before the dormitory bell last night," answered Jennings.

"Yes, but before that-what punishment did he give you?"

"Well, he was going to make us eat cakes, but we didn't want to, and he let us go."

Venables was surprised, and Jennings and Darbishire were happy- After breakfast they sat down at a table in a corner of a common room. They decided to finish the second issue of the Form Three Times and hang it on the notice-board on Monday.

The first story was about Mr Wilkins, of course.

"When I talked to him last night he told me that he and another student used to get up early and practise every morning," said Darbishire.

"Maybe we'll begin our story with this. Something like: When Mr Wilkins was young he used to have a row with somebody before breakfast."

Jennings wrote it down, looked at it and said, "We can't say that, Darbi. You may say row [rou] and row [rau]. And if you say row [rau] it will mean..."

"I see", interrupted Darbishire, "and not surprised - he could have a row [rau] every morning - I know Old Wilkie. But maybe it will be better to say that when he had a row [rou] he always used a boat, so the boys will understand."

"Well, of course he had a row in a boat- where else?"

They tried many ways to make the meaning clear, but they decided to cross it out, and, wrote that Mr Wilkins was a famous sportsman.

Then they came to Mr Carter's age. "Have you worked out that sum about Mr Carter's age?" asked Darbishire.

"I asked Mr Carter to tell me that sum again, but couldn't work it out with x's and y's; so I used a's and b's."

"And what's the answer?"

"Well, maybe I made a mistake somewhere, but my answer is: he must be a hundred-and-six next birthday. It shows that you can't believe all that grown-ups say."

"You are right, Jen," agreed Darbishire. "You can never tell what

they are going to do next. Look at Old Wilkie last Saturday. You can't explain his behaviour, can you?"

"No, I can't," said Jennings.

Jennings and Darbishire finished writing their newspaper just as the dinner bell rang.

They took their stories to Mr Carter who corrected and typed them, and on Monday morning the next issue of the Form Three Times was hanging on the notice-board in the common room.

After that Mr Wilkins had to write more than twenty autographs that morning. Then he shut himself in his room and did not answer the door.

For three days he did not look at the notice-board in the common room, but on the evening of the fourth day, after the boys were in bed, Mr Carter saw him tiptoeing from the common room.

"Well, Wilkins, what do you think of your life-story?" asked Mr Carter.

"Silly little boys!" answered Mr Wilkins. "If only they showed as much interest in their algebra as they have in the Boat Race. Silly little boys!"

But Mr Carter could see that Mr Wilkins was really happy.

Next day the Headmaster visited the common room and looked through the Form Three Times. After that he had a short talk with Mr Carter and left the common room. Jennings and Darbishire ran up to Mr Carter.

"Sir, please, sir, what did he say?"

"Yes, sir, did he like it, sir?"

"I think so," Mr Carter answered. "He told me that such hobbies keep you out of mischief."

"It's very nice of him to say so," said Jennings.

Mr Carter smiled.

"What's the matter, sir? Have I said something funny?" asked Jennings.

"No, no," said Mr Carter. "I was thinking, of your Form Three Times which kept you out of mischief."

"What do you mean, sir?" asked Darbishire.

Mr Carter thought for a moment. Then he said:

"Well, during the last weeks I've noticed some strange things: smoke in the dark room, fish in a chimney which happened after you had come back from the harbour with a parcel of fish and I put two and two together and understood what it all meant. Then I remember, also, a sudden interest in Latin textbooks. I'm not quite sure what was behind it all, but I know that when we organized a textbook inspection not all the boys of Form Three were happy."

"Yes, sir... I'm very sorry, sir," said Jennings. "I didn't know you

knew all that, sir."

"Don't look so sad, boys," said Mr Carter. "I think the Form Three Times is a very good wall newspaper. And what's more - I think it has kept you out of even worse mischief!"

Chapter Twenty-Five
Jennings' new hobby

If hobbies keep the children out of mischief, as Mr Pemberton said, it was riot so with Jennings.

His next hobby (after the wall newspaper) was home-made telephone. The idea came to him before school one Monday when he was I looking for his exercise-book in his desk.

"You know what, Darbi," he said to his friend. "If we had a telephone here I could ring up and ask him if he has got it in the staff room."

"Who has got what in the staff room?" asked Darbishire. It was not always easy to understand what Jennings meant.

"My English exercise-book: I can't find it anywhere in my desk. I think Mr Carter took it at the end of the lesson yesterday afternoon."

"I don't see what you are worrying about," said Darbishire. "If you think Mr Carter has got your English exercise-book, why don't you go and ask him?"

"That's what I shall have to do. I only said that if we had a telephone here I could ring Mr Carter up and ask him, and now I'll have to go there myself."

"You must be crazy, Jen, if you think that the Headmaster could let us have a telephone in the classroom."

"I don't mean a real telephone. I mean a home-made telephone," explained Jennings. "I read an article in a magazine last holidays that told you all about it. It's so easy, really. You need two coffee tins. Then join them together with a long piece of string."

"And then what?"

"Well, that's all. You talk into one of the tins and somebody else listens with the help of the other tin."

Darbishire did not believe it. "It will never work in a million years," he said.

"It will," answered Jennings. "The article said so. The sound waves go along the string and make the bottom of the coffee tin vibrate."

"Still we can't do it."

"But why?"

"We haven't got any coffee tins."

"But they don't have to be coffee tins! We can use any old tins."

"Oh, that's not so bad," agreed Darbishire. "Atkinson has a syrup tin."

"That's good."

"I don't think you will hear much through it," said Darbishire.

"You see, it's still half-full of syrup. Of course we can wait till he has eaten it..."

"Well, we can't wait. If I have a good idea, I must begin at once. There must be hundreds of empty tins near the school.

Oh, I know! Mr Carter always has round tobacco tins. I'm sure he will give us some empty ones. Let's go to the staff room and ask him."

"It's a pity you haven't got the telephone already," said Darbishire. "Then you could ring Mr Carter from here."

Jennings looked at him. "That's what I said some moments ago, and you said that I was crazy. Well, now I think you are crazy, because if we had a telephone here already, we wouldn't need to ask Mr Carter for tobacco tins."

"No, I didn't mean that. I thought you wanted to ask him about your English exercise-book."

"Oh, that!" said Jennings. He quickly went out of the classroom and along the corridor. Darbishire followed him. When they turned a corner they nearly collided with Binns and Blotwell, the youngest boys in the school.

"Why are you hurrying?" asked Blotwell

"We are going to ask Mr Carter for some empty tins," answered Darbishire.

"Empty tins of what?" asked Binns.

"You are crazy," said Jennings. "What are empty tins usually full of?"

"Nothing."

"Well, now you see," said Jennings and hurried to the staff room.

When they came in Mr Carter was preparing his lesson for the afternoon.

"Sir, please, sir, have you any empty tobacco tins that you can give me, please, sir?"

"A lot. What do you want them for?"

"I have a wonderful idea, sir. I'll tell you about it if you like, sir."

Mr Carter listened, and then said, "All right, Jennings, I'll give you some tins. But I'll tell you that I don't like your idea very much. I am sure you can spend your free time on something much more useful."

"But it is useful, sir. It's a new idea," you see..."

"New! It's as old as the hills."

"Well, it's new to us, sir. And I think the teachers will be very happy, really. You see, we shan't make so much noise in the common room as we usually do, because we shall whisper into our tins instead of shouting across the room, sir."

"That's good. But why do you have to whisper?" asked Mr Carter. "Will it not work if you just speak?"

"Oh, yes, sir, it will work, but we shall have to whisper because

the boy to whom we were speaking could hear us without his earphone, sir."

Mr Carter smiled to himself when he opened the cupboard door and looked for empty tobacco tins. He was sure that the whole idea was nonsense. But at the same time he decided not to argue, because he was sure it was useless to argue with Jennings and Darbishire now. So he gave them two empty tobacco tins and the boys were happy.

"Very decent of Mr Carter, wasn't it?" Darbishire said when he followed his friend into the corridor and closed the staff room door.

There was no time to begin their work, because the bell for afternoon school rang when the boys came back to their classroom. But after the lessons that evening they hurried to the common room and began to work. Some other third form boys gathered round and watched them.

Jennings and Darbishire made little holes in the tins, put a piece of string through them and secured each end with a knot.

"The most wonderful thing the world has ever known!" said Jennings loudly.

"I'm sure it doesn't work," said Atkinson. "Where are the batteries? Where is the electricity?"

"It doesn't need anything like batteries or electricity," said Darbishire. "Jennings says that the sound waves go along the string and make the tin vibrate."

"Look, I'll show you," said Jennings.

He gave one of the tins to Darbishire and went to the common room door with the other tin in his hand.

"I'll go out of the room. You speak first, Darbi, and I'll answer," said Jennings and hurried out of the room.

He put his ear to the tin. Time passed but he did not hear anything.

The door opened and Temple's head appeared.

"Darbi wants to know if you are ready," I he said.

"Of course, I'm ready," answered Jennings.

After some time he heard some noise in the earphone. "Awah buss oojah barn."

These were the words that Jennings heard. But what did they mean? After some moments his ear got used to the sounds and he heard: "...five elevens are fifty-five and five twelves are sixty..." It was Darbishire's voice! Jennings was happy. "Well, Jen, you can speak now."

Jennings put his earphone to his mouth and thought for a moment. "What shall I say?

Well, I shall be a space pilot, the first man on the Moon."

"Hallo, Earth!.. Hallo, Earth! Moon calling Earth. This is Space

Pilot Jennings speaking from the Moon. Do you hear me?.. Do you hear me?" And he put the earphone to his ear again.

"Yes, I hear you," he heard Darbishire's voice...

The teacher on duty that evening was Mr Wilkins. When he walked along the corridor he saw Jennings at the door of the common room. Mr Wilkins noticed that the boy was talking to himself. Of course strange things sometimes happened at Linbury Court Boarding School; but when he saw Jennings speaking into a tin, he decided that he must ask for an explanation.

"Why are you talking to yourself, Jennings?" asked Mr Wilkins. ? "Oh, I am not, sir," the boy answered. "I am talking to somebody down on the Earth, sir - I mean somebody in the common room."

Mr Wilkins looked at the closed door.

"I spoke over the space telephone, sir," explained Jennings, "from the Moon, sir. You can hear their answer if you listen through this earphone, sir."

But Mr Wilkins did not want to know 'about the life on the Earth.

"Another of your hobbies!" he said. "I can never understand why you silly little boys spend your free time on such silly things. Well, what I mean Jennings, is this. If this hobby leads you into trouble, as it did last time, I'll - I'll... Well, it had better not lead to trouble, that's all."

Mr Wilkins left, and Jennings went into the common room where he and Darbishire repeated their tests. The tests showed that their home-made telephone could send messages any distance up to about ten yards. So they went to bed quite happily.

Chapter Twenty-Six
Jennings writes his name on his eraser

The next morning Jennings and Darbishire spent every moment of their free time with ears or mouths in a tobacco tin. They talked about the weather or asked about each other's health. At last they were tired of their homemade telephone.

"You know, Darbi, we have to think of something else that we can do with our homemade telephone," said Jennings. "It's silly to say 'How are you?' and 'I'm all right. How are you?' again and again."

"Yes, I see what you mean," answered Darbishire. "But it's very difficult to know what else to say after the first half an hour."

"Well, never mind, I expect I'll think of something," said Jennings.

The next lesson was geography, but Mr Wilkins, who taught this subject to Form Three decided to spend the first ten minutes on an inspection of books and stationery.

"Well, boys! Take out your books in all subjects and lay them on your desks," said Mr Wilkins.

Form Three were surprised.

"All our books, sir? But it's a geography lesson, sir," said Bromwich.

"You heard what I said. And I also want to see your pens, pencils, erasers, rulers, everything."

"Is it an inspection, sir?" asked Atkinson.

"Of course it's an inspection. You don't think I'm organizing an exhibition, do you? I want to be quite sure that each thing has its owner's name on it."

Form Three liked book and stationery inspections as it was a pleasant change. The boys decided to make it last till the end of the lesson.

"Sir, please, sir, what shall I do, sir? I haven't got my name on my algebra book, sir," Temple began.

"Write it on the book at once then," came the answer.

Darbishire decided to ask the next pointless question.

"Please, sir, I've only got two inches of my ruler."

"Well?"

"Well, sir, my name is too long, sir, and I can't write it on one side. So will it be all right if I write Darbi on one side and shire on the other, sir?"

"I... I... Don't ask such silly questions, you silly little boy!"

"But, sir, I was only thinking..."

"Well, don't think!" said Mr Wilkins angrily. "Now the first thing I

want to do is to make a list of all boys who need stationery. So, please, be quiet and put your hands up if you need anything."

Now Atkinson was the first. "Please, sir, I would write my name on my ruler, if I had one, but I gave it to Bromwich who says that he has lost it."

"Please, sir, can I ask for a new pencil if mine is only one and three-quarter inches long?" It was Crosby.

When at last Mr Wilkins finished the list, he stood up from the desk.

"I'm going to the staff room to get these things for you. And you, please, write down your names on all your books and stationery," said Mr Wilkins and went to the door.

"Sir, please, sir, how can I put my name on the eraser, sir?" It was Jennings. "You see, I tried to write my name in pencil, sir, but it disappears every time I rub something

out."

"I'm not taking any excuses," said Mr Wilkins. "Think of something!"

"But, sir..."

"Be quiet, Jennings, and do as I told you. If I find any of your things that hasn't your name on when I get back, I'll - I'll... Well, it had better have your name on, that's all," said Mr Wilkins and left the classroom.

For some moments Jennings sat thinking. All his other things had his name on them. How could he put it on the eraser? "And now that Mr Wilkins knows that my eraser hasn't got my name on, he will certainly want to know whether I have written my name on it or not... Shall I take a penknife and carve my name on the eraser?"

But at that moment he looked at the desk in front of him where Bromwich was gathering his books for the inspection. Near the books lay a ruler on which the name of the owner was branded by focusing the rays of the sun through a magnifying glass.

Here was the answer, Jennings decided. It was an autumn day, but the sun was shining brightly that afternoon.

"Hey, Bromo, may I borrow your magnifying glass, please?" asked Jennings.

Bromwich passed him the magnifying glass, and Jennings began to focus the rays of the sun on his eraser. Soon the eraser began to smoke. It worked! It worked! Jennings was happy.

Very slowly he began to move the magnifying glass, and soon the first letter of his name was ready. But he was so absorbed in his work that he did not notice a smell of burning rubber. But the other boys in the classroom noticed it.

"I say," Venables turned to Temple, "something is burning."

"I'm sure rubber is burning somewhere," answered Temple. He began to look around the room and soon found it. "Hey, Jennings, what do you think you are doing? Are you trying to suffocate the whole Form Three?"

Jennings looked at him, surprised.

"I'm only writing my name on my eraser. Don't worry. I've nearly finished. I must only do another... Hey! Help! The whole rubber is on fire!"

In a moment the whole classroom was full of smoke.

"You must be crazy, Jen," said Temple. "What will Old Wilkie say when..."

The door opened and Mr Wilkins came into the classroom with exercise-books and stationery in his hands. But he did not go far. He stopped between the door and his desk and smelt.

"There's something on fire!" he said.

"It's all right, sir," Jennings said quickly.

"It certainly isn't all right. I can smell it." And he smelt again. "Burning rubber, that's what it is."

"Yes, I know, sir, but it was by chance. I was only doing what you told me."

"I never told you to set fire to the building."

"I didn't mean that, sir. I was only writing my name on my eraser, sir."

"What! With a magnifying glass!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins when he saw the magnifying glass on Jennings' desk.

"Yes, sir. It worked well on Bromwich's ruler, sir, so I thought..."

"You silly little boy!" said Mr Wilkins and dropped the exercise-books and stationery on his desk.

Now Form Three decided to use the situation. The boys began to cough loudly.

"May we open the windows, sir?" said Atkinson,. and the boys ran to the windows.

"Be quiet!" said Mr Wilkins loudly. "Stop this nonsense and go back to your places!"

"But, sir, we can't breathe, sir," said Venables. "You said yourself that the whole room was..."

"Do as I tell you and be quiet!"

When everybody was sitting down at their desks, Mr Wilkins said, "You will have to come to the detention class this evening..."

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Form Three.

"...if you don't behave yourselves now."

Form Three breathed again. Mr Wilkins wasn't a bad man, after all.

"And you, Jennings..." began Mr Wilkins.

"But I was only doing what you told me," said Jennings. "You said I had to write my name on..."

"Don't argue with me, boy! I've had enough nonsense from you, and if I have any more I'll - I'll... Well, there had better not be any more nonsense, that's all."

Chapter Twenty-Seven
The telephone line between dormitory 4 and dormitory 6

When Mr Wilkins went into the staff room after the end of afternoon school he found Mr Hind there.

"What's the matter, Wilkins?" asked Mr Hind. "You look so sad."

"You can't look happy after a lesson in Form Three. Take that boy Jennings for example..."

"Oh, yes! Jennings, as usual!"

"What can you do with a boy like that? I'm really tired of him."

"He doesn't mean to be disobedient. But the harder he tries to be good the worse it is. We can only hope that after some time he'll learn how to behave," said Mr Hind.

But during that week it was not quite so.

After Jennings had invented his home-made telephone the hobby spread through the whole school. Binns and Blotwell organized Form I Home-Made Telephone Line and the boys of Form I spent all their free time with tobacco tins near their mouths or ears. They sat in different parts of the common room and spoke to one another.

That was already not very interesting for Jennings. He was thinking of something new.

"It came to me suddenly in the middle of the history lesson," Jennings said to the boys of Form Three. "I thought we could make a direct line between Dormitory 6 and Dormitory 4. With the help of this line we can send messages after the teacher on duty puts the light out. That's the idea."

It was a good idea, because the window of Dormitory 4 on the floor of the building was directly above the window of Dormitory 6. In Dormitory 4 Jennings and Darbishire together with Venables, Atkinson, Temple and Bromwich slept. Dormitory 6 was larger, and twelve boys slept there. Among them were Jones and Crosby who were now listening to Jennings' plan.

"When the teacher on duty puts the 1 light out," Jennings explained, "I'll lower (one end of the telephone out of my window to Dormitory 6. A tap of the tobacco tin on the window will tell you that I'm going to start. And you," he turned to Jones and Crosby, "will have to take your end of the telephone. The teacher on duty usually puts out the light in our dormitory and then goes down and does the same in your dormitory. So when I see that your window is dark, I'll begin to lower your .end of the telephone."

"Yes, I understand that part of your plan," said Crosby, a tall boy

with red hair and freckles. "But what messages are we going to send each other?"

That was a difficult question and Jennings knew it. "We'll soon think of something to talk about," he said. "For example, you can... you can ring up and ask what the exact time it is. And we can say, 'At the third pip it will be eight twenty-seven exactly!'"

"I'll do the pips," said Darbishire.

"What else can we do?" Jennings thought. The most interesting messages were those, which he and Darbishire had during their lunar expedition.

Jennings turned to Crosby and said, "I'll tell you what. Dormitory 4 can be Mars, and we'll pretend that you and Jones are on Earth."

"Why do we have to pretend that we are on Earth," said Crosby. "We have been down on Earth all our lives."

"Well, you know what I mean. Darbi and I are out in space and we are sending you messages," said Jennings.

"All right," said Jones. "But I don't understand why we have to stay..."

"Don't argue, Crosby. We are on Mars, and you are down on Earth, and when you hear a tap on your dormitory window - you'll know that I've lowered the telephone."

"All right," said Crosby. "We'll do what we can, but it will not be our fault if something goes wrong."

"But nothing can be wrong," said Jennings.

* * *

The members of Dormitory 6 took off their clothes very quickly that evening.

"Hurry up into bed, you boys," Crosby said to his friends: "Mr Wilkins is on duty. So let's not make him wait."

"Why not?" they wanted to know.

"Because there will be a message from Mars after Mr Wilkins puts the light out," explained Crosby.

"So don't ask him questions when he comes in to put the light out," advised Jones. "Say 'good night' and that's all."

Mr Wilkins was surprised when he came into Dormitory 6 and found all the boys in their beds. He was also surprised when he saw that the boys were waiting for him to put out the light. He had noticed the same thing in Dormitory 4 which he had visited some minutes earlier. At the same time Mr Wilkins was very pleased. "The boys now understood at last that they must behave themselves when the teacher on duty is L. P. Wilkins," he thought.

He turned off the light.

"Good night, sir. ... Good night," said Crosby at once.

"What do you mean - good night? I haven't gone yet."

"No, but you are going, aren't you, sir?"

"I'll go when I'm ready, and not before," said Mr Wilkins. "I want to be sure that everybody is going to sleep before I go."

He went to the window and for some minutes stood and looked down at the school yard.

"The dormitory is dark now,, and there will be a tap on the window at any moment," thought Jones.

"You don't have to stay here specially for us, sir," he said.

"That's all right. I'm not in a hurry," said Mr Wilkins. He turned from the window and began to walk about the dormitory.

"I think I heard the bell for teachers' supper," said Crosby.

"Really! Your sense of hearing must be wonderful..."

"Oh, yes, sir; it is, sir."

"...if you can hear sounds before they happen. Now you'll tell me that you can hear..." Mr Wilkins stopped - he heard a tap on the window behind him. "What was that?" he exclaimed. Dormitory 6 wanted to show that they did not hear anything. "What was what, sir?" they asked. "Didn't you hear anything now? Not even you Crosby, with your wonderful sense of hearing?"

Again a tap on the window. "There it is again - a tap," said Mr Wilkins and hurried back to the window.

"Yes, I think it is a tap, sir. The hot tap on the wash-basin often makes a funny noise, sir," said Jones.

"No, no, no. Not a water tap, you silly little boy. Somebody is tapping 'on the window."

Mr Wilkins opened the window and put his head out into the cool evening.

At the last moment Jennings saw that it was not Crosby's head, but Mr Wilkins', and quickly pulled the string up. So when Mr Wilkins looked down, then right and left, and then above his head he certainly did not see anything.

"It's too dark to see anything," he said and shut the window. "I'm going into the yard to see that all is well."

Chapter Twenty-Eight
Jennings and Darbishire give the alarm

Mr Wilkins went out of Dormitory 6 and hurried to the school yard. In the hall he met Mr Carter.

"I say, Carter, something strange is going on in the school yard," said Mr Wilkins. "Somebody is tapping on Dormitory 6 window."

Mr Carter smiled.

"Nonsense, Wilkins. I can't believe it. Nobody could tap on Dormitory 6 window from the ground without a ladder."

"All right, all right. I'm just telling you what happened. I'm not trying to explain it," said Mr Wilkins. "Maybe he used a ladder."

"You think that suddenly during the night somebody had a wish to clean windows. Well, really, Wilkins!"

"Of course not. I think that somebody was in the school yard. Somebody who disappeared when I looked out of the window. It could be a burglar."

"I don't think so," said Mr Carter. "Why did a burglar have to choose that strange time and place."

But Mr Wilkins was sure that there was somebody in the school yard.

"I didn't say there was a burglar. I said there could be," he answered coldly. "And I must find out who it was."

"All right. I'll come with you," said Mr Carter with a smile.

The two teachers went out and closed the door behind them. It was cold and the moon was shining brightly.

For some minutes they walked about the school yard, but, of course, they did not find anybody.

"I think you frightened him away when you put your head out of the window," said Mr Carter and smiled again.

"You don't think there was a burglar, do you?" Mr Wilkins got angry. "I see you don't believe me."

"I certainly think that you were mistaken. But I think you were right to come out and see. And as there is nobody in the yard, let's go back and have our supper."

But when they came up to the door they found that neither of them had a key. Mr Wilkins rang the bell. But there was no answer. Now they had to wait in the cool November evening. Half a minute later Mr Wilkins rang the bell again. After that he knocked and rang the bell again and again, but nobody came to answer. It was not surprising, because everybody was at that time having supper in the dining hall at the far end of the building.

Suddenly Mr Wilkins said, "Never mind, Carter. I've now remembered that I saw an open window. It's a window in Classroom 2 which is on the ground floor. So you stay here, and I'll climb in and open the door for you."

With these words Mr Wilkins hurried down the steps, turned round the corner of the building and came up to the window of Classroom 2. It was really open, and a moment later he was on the window-ledge, his head in the dark room and his feet still hanging over the window-ledge.

If only he had known with what interest two boys watched him from the window of Dormitory 4!

* * *

Fifteen minutes earlier Jennings had been greatly surprised to see Mr Wilkins put his head out of the window of Dormitory 6. He was so surprised that he nearly dropped the telephone on Mr Wilkins' head. Jennings quickly shut the window.

"Old Wilkie is still there," he whispered to Darbishire.

"Are you sure?" his friend asked him.

"Of course I'm sure. I nearly dropped the telephone on his head when he put it out of the window."

"You don't think he saw you, do you?" "Oh, no, he didn't see me. But let's wait some minutes and give him time to leave the room before we try again."

The dormitory floor was cold and the two boys climbed back into bed.

"What's the matter?" whispered Temple.

"Yes, what has happened?" whispered Venables.

"Everything is all right," said Jennings.

When Darbishire climbed back into his warm bed his only wish was not to get out of it and not to stand in front of an open window.

Not so Jennings! "We must think about our messages now, while we are waiting," he said.

"I don't think it is very important," answered Darbishire. "Well, you may ask them why Old Wilkie didn't go to have his supper, but was looking at the moon."

"Yes, but what are we going to talk about after that?" asked Jennings. "We've just arrived on Mars, you see, and we have to tell them all about it."

"Well, why not say, 'We've just arrived and are having a good time!'"

"We can't say that. You are not sending a postcard home, are

you?"

"Well, think about something better, then."

"That's what I'm trying to do," said Jennings. "You can't understand that we are space pilots, and we must say something important to the world which is waiting for our messages."

They were talking about their messages for some time. At last Jennings said:

"I think Old Wilkie has gone to have his supper. So I'll try again." He got out of bed and took his home-made telephone. "Wake up, Darbi! Don't sleep! Come and help me!"

Darbishire got out of bed, put on his slippers ("It's very cold on Mars," he said to himself) and slowly went to the window to help his friend.

At that moment Jennings looked through the window and saw... no, he could not believe his eyes. In the school yard he saw a man climbing through the window of Classroom 2.

"Look, Darbi, look!" he exclaimed.

Darbishire looked out.

"Who is it?" he whispered.

"I can't see. Can you?"

"No, I can't," answered Darbishire. "Do you think it's a burglar?"

"I think it is. Who climbs through the window at this time of night?"

"What shall we do then?"

"We'll go and tell Old Wilkie. All the teachers are having supper now. So I'm sure they didn't hear anything."

From this conversation the other boys of Dormitory 4 understood that something important was happening. They jumped out of their beds and ran to the window. When they were near the window they saw only a pair of feet disappearing over the window-ledge of Classroom 2.

The boys were surprised. They forgot about the home-made telephone at once, because here was an adventure which doesn't often happen in a boarding school.

Jennings spoke the first. "Darbi and I will go and give the alarm. You, other boys, stay here and watch the school yard," he said.

"Yes, but if..." began Darbishire.

"Oh, come on, Darbi! Don't stand there! We'll go straight down to the dining hall and tell one of the teachers."

"Yes, but - wait a minute, I... I've dropped my spectacles."

"You don't need your spectacles. Follow me and do as I say."

Jennings took Darbishire by the hand and they ran to the dining hall.

Chapter Twenty-Nine
Mr Wilkins looks for... Mr Wilkins

Jennings and Darbishire hurried downstairs. Near the library they stopped. In front of them was the hall which they had to cross to walk to the dining hall at the far end of the building. Suddenly they heard footsteps. Somebody walked in the hall.

"Can you see anybody?" Darbishire whispered.

"I can," answered Jennings. He could see Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins going from the hall into the corridor on their way to the dining hall.

"Sir! ... Sir!" he called in a whisper. But

neither of the teachers heard his whisper. Jennings took Darbishire by the hand again and the boys crossed the hall and hurried along the corridor after the teachers. But when they turned the last corner they could only see Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins disappearing through the dining hall door.

"After them, quick!" said Jennings.

"Yes, but what if...?"

"Don't argue, Darbi! Do as I say."

When Jennings spoke, the dining hall door opened again and Mr Pemberton came out into the corridor after his supper. He looked at the boys in surprise.

"What are you boys doing out of bed?" he asked.

"Oh, sir! Sir! There's a burglar in the school, sir!" said Jennings.

The news didn't surprise the Headmaster. "Nonsense," he answered.

"But there is a burglar, sir,- really!"

"Yes, that's quite right. We've seen him!" said Darbishire. "Only his back, of course, but I'm sure he was a burglar, because he climbed in through the window. All the other boys in the dormitory saw him too, sir."

"And he is walking about the school somewhere at this moment. So we thought we must come and tell somebody, sir," said Jennings.

The Headmaster did not know how Mr Wilkins has come into the building and believed the boys.

"And where exactly is this man?" he asked.

"We don't know where he is now, sir. It was some minutes ago that we saw him," answered Jennings. "But we didn't meet him when we were coming down here. So maybe he is still on the ground floor somewhere, sir."

"All right; I'll see to it. And you, please, go back to your

dormitory," said the Headmaster.

"It's most unfair," Jennings said to Darbishire when they walked back to their dormitory; "We told him about the burglar and he sent us to bed."

On their way back to their dormitory they came to each dormitory and told the boys the news of the burglar. By the time they reached their own dormitory the whole school woke up.

The Headmaster hurried back to the dining hall where Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins were beginning their supper. Mr Hind and one or two other teachers who had already finished their supper were going to leave the table. They looked up at the Headmaster when he came into the room.

"I think that there may be a stranger in the building," said Mr Pemberton.

The teacher stood up from the table.

"There may be nothing in it, of course," continued the Headmaster, "but I think we have to organize small search-parties which will go and look for the stranger. You will come with me. Hind, and we'll go around the ground floor. And maybe you will go in pairs to the other parts of the building."

And with these words the Headmaster and Mr Hind went out of the dining hall.

Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins left their supper and went out of the dining hall too.

"You see. Carter, I was right after all. Now you've heard what the Headmaster said, and maybe you'll believe me."

Mr Carter did not answer. "I want to know who told the Headmaster about a stranger," he thought. "I'll ask him about it when I see him."

They looked for a stranger for half an hour - in classrooms, common room, library, kitchens and gymnasium. But they could not find anybody, of course.

* * *

It was after ten o'clock when the teachers gathered in the staff room. Mr Hind was already there when Mr Carter and Mr Wilkins came in, but the Headmaster was still in the school yard.

"Tell me. Hind," asked Mr Carter. "Did the Headmaster say how he had found out about a stranger?"

"Oh, yes, Two of the boys told him," Mr Hind answered. "One of them was Jennings,

I think."

"Jennings, as usual! Let's go to Dormitory 4, Wilkins, and find out everything ourselves,"

said Mr Carter.

"I don't see how they can help us. They've already told the Headmaster all they know," answered Mr Wilkins. "If you ask me the burglar is miles away now."

"I don't think he is so far," said Mr Carter and went out of the staff room. Mr Wilkins followed him. In Dormitory 4 when Mr Carter turned on the light the boys began to ask

the teachers questions.

"Sir, have you caught him, sir?" asked

Atkinson.

"If you haven't caught him, he must still be somewhere in the building. But where can he be?" asked Temple.

"We all saw him, really, sir," said Bromwich.

"Yes, but I was the first to see him," said Jennings. "Don't forget."

"Well, Jennings," said Mr Carter. "Exactly when and where did you see him?"

"Some minutes after the teacher on duty turned off the light in Dormitory 6, sir. I looked down at the school yard and there was a man climbing in through the window

of Classroom 2, sir."

"What!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "Classroom 2!... Classroom 2 window! But, you silly little boy, Jennings, that wasn't a burglar. I was climbing in because I hadn't got a key!"

Jennings caught his breath. • "I'm sorry, I'm very sorry, sir!" he said. "Sorry!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "Sorry! Do you understand what you made me do? For half an hour I walked round the building looking for myself!" Suddenly he turned to Mr Carter and said, "Yes, Carter, but if I am Jennings' burglar, who did I hear when I was in Dormitory 6 - the man who tapped on the window?"

Mr Carter quickly went to the window. Near the window he saw two tobacco tins with a long piece of string between them "I think maybe this will explain everything," said Mr Carter. "Isn't it so, Jennings?"

For some moments Jennings did not speak.

Then he said, "Well, yes, that was me, sir. You see, I was lowering my telephone to Dormitory 6, but at that moment Mr Wilkins:' looked out."

"That's funny!" exclaimed Mr Carter. "It means, Wilkins, that your burglar was Jennings; and his burglar was you."

Mr Wilkins did not like the explanation. "Yes, yes, yes. But why did the silly little boy drop telephone out of the windows after lights out?"

"Well, sir, we pretended we were going into space. We were on Mars, you see, and we wanted to send a message..."

"Mars!... Space!... Nonsense!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins.

"And what was the message that you were going to send?" asked Mr Carter.

"Well, sir, we were going to tell them that we were doing all these things in the name of peace," answered Jennings.

"You were doing all these things in the name of peace?" exclaimed Mr Wilkins again. "You certainly must be crazy, Jennings!"

It was too late, decided Mr Carter, to ask any more questions. So he turned off the light in Dormitory 4, and together with Mr Wilkins he went back to his cold supper.

Chapter Thirty
Morning music

The next morning Jennings was standing in front of the Headmaster. To his surprise the Headmaster said very little about the false alarm, because before that Mr Carter had had a conversation with the Headmaster during which he pointed out to Mr Pemberton that the boys had acted with the best of intentions.

But all the boys who had anything to do with the telephone line between Dormitory 4 and Dormitory 6 were punished and all the home-made telephones were confiscated

"We must watch the dormitories better. If we do it such things will never happen again," the Headmaster said to the teachers the next morning. "I think the boys will behave better if they know there is a teacher not far from their dormitory after they have gone to bed. So I want to ask you, Wilkins, to change your bedroom and move nearer to the dormitories."

"Very well," said Mr Wilkins. "I think you want me to move into the room which is near the music room?"

Yes, you are right. Thank you, Witkins, I'm sure you will like the room."

And Mr Wilkins really liked the room. It was larger and lighter than his old room. But there was one thing which did not like: there was only a thin wall between his nice room and the music room. And all the evenings and early mornings he had to listen to the boys playing the piano in the music room.

On the first morning the bell woke him up at a quarter past seven. Some minutes later he suddenly heard a sound that told him that somebody had dropped a book on the keyboard. Then somebody began to play Beethoven's Minuet in but with so many mistakes that it was very difficult to say whether it was Beethoven's Minuet in G or something else. Then somebody began to play with one finger. That was too much for

Mr Wilkins.

He got up from his bed, crossed the room and knocked on the wall. The music stopped. But some moments later somebody began to play again - with one finger.

Mr Wilkins quickly dressed, left his room and went into the music room. The somebody was Jennings.

"Jennings, as usual!" said Mr Wilkins. "What's going on here?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Jennings. "I'm learning my piano lesson, sir."

"And who taught you to play with one finger?"

"I was playing by ear, sir."

"Were you?"

"You see, there is a place which Mr Hind hasn't shown me, so..."

"Now listen to me, Jennings," interrupted Mr Wilkins. "If your time to play the piano in the music room is from half past seven till the breakfast bell rings, I want to hear; - you playing all the time without stopping."

"You want to hear me playing without stopping! You mean you like my playing, sir? Is this why you knocked on the wall?"

"That certainly wasn't applause," said Mr Wilkins. "You know that now I live in the next room. So I can hear everything that goes on - and everything that doesn't go on, too."

"Yes, sir."

"So if you hear my knock on the wall it means that you must learn your music lesson and not to sit and look out of the window or play with one finger."

"Well, sir, I have to stop sometimes, sir, to turn over a page, or when I'm not quite, sure what the next note is."

"I think I can understand that. But if I, have to knock on the wall more than once, I'll - I'll..." Mr Wilkins did not finish the sentence and left the room.

When the door shut behind Mr Wilkins, Jennings turned to the piano. He liked to learn his music lessons before breakfast. He thought that was the best time for it, because it meant that the rest of the day was free for other more interesting things. But now with Mr Wilkins in the next room...

Not that Jennings didn't like to learn music. He was even interested in music lessons. which he had with Mr Hind twice a week. But with Mr Wilkins in the next room... For the next two weeks Jennings tried to play the piano without stopping. At the end of this time during his Thursday morning piano lesson with Mr Hind Jennings was playing again and again Beethoven's Minuet in G.

"No, no, no, Jennings!" Mr Hind put his hand on his pupil's arm. "You always make the same mistake when you come to this place."

"Yes, I know, sir," said Jennings. "Shall 1 play it again?"

"No, please, don't. I think, Jennings, you don't practise properly."

"Oh, but I do, sir, really, sir," said Jennings. "You have to practise properly when Mr Wilkins is in the next room. He always knocks on the wall if I stop to blow my nose."

"I'm very happy to hear it," said Mr Hind. "All right, Jennings, try this again."

This time he played the piece without any wrong notes.

"Well, sir! I played it without a mistake this time. Soon I'll play it

really well, won't I, sir?"

"Hm!" Mr Hind thought for a moment. "Do you want to hear the Minuet in G played properly?"

"But I played it properly last time, sir," Jennings said in surprise.

"That's what you think!" Mr Hind got up from his chair and went to the record-player which was standing in one corner of the room. "I've got a record of that minuet; a very famous pianist plays it on this record. Do you want to hear it?"

"Yes, of course, sir."

Jennings jumped from the piano stool and hurried to help Mr Hind. He switched on the record-player and opened the lid while Mr Hind was looking for the record. Then they sat down and listened to the music.

"He is playing well," Jennings thought when he was listening to the record. "Of course some music sounds better on a good record-player than on the old music room piano. And I think that pianist had more time to practise it. But really he is playing it very well."

"He hasn't made any mistakes!" exclaimed Jennings when the record stopped. "I wish I could play the piano like that, sir!"

"Yes, certainly," Mr Hind answered when he closed the lid of the record-player. . "And I only hope that it was very useful for you • to listen to this record."

"Oh, yes, sir, it was," It was only later that Jennings understood how really useful this record was to him.

Chapter Thirty-One
Jennings skates on roller-skates

When Mr Carter went out of Form 5 classroom at the beginning of morning break he saw Jennings who was running along the corridor.

"Jennings, as usual!" Mr Carter said and asked him to stop. "How many times have I told you not to run in the corridor?"

"I'm sorry, sir," said Jennings. "You see, I'm in a hurry. Venables has given me his roller-skates for the whole break."

"I see."

"May I go, sir?"

"Yes, you may. But, please, don't run."

"Thank you, sir," said Jennings and hurried to the school yard. In the school yard he saw Venables waiting for him with a roller-skate in each hand.

"I'll screw them up for you, and then I'll leave you," said Venables and took the key from his pocket. "You see, Temple has just got a parcel and I want to be there when he opens it. Maybe there are some sweets in it."

Venables quickly screwed up the skates, put the key into his pocket and ran to help Temple to open the parcel.

A moment later Darbishire came into the school yard and saw his friend's wobbling legs.

"Well, it's only the second time that I've tried these skates," said Jennings. "'Walk with me a little, and I'll be all right."

"I knew you were not a good skater, Jen," said Darbishire.

"But these skates are different from the skates that I learned on."

"All right, Jen. Take me by the arm."

Jennings took Darbishire by the arm and they made two laps round the school yard, after which Jennings began to skate without his friend's help.

He was finishing his twentieth lap when the bell rang for the end of break. At once all the boys ran to school, and when Jennings ran up to Darbishire, who was waiting for him, there was nobody else in the school yard.

"Take the skates off, Jen, quick!" said Darbishire. "Old Wilkie is taking us for Geography next lesson, and you know. what there will be if we are late."

, "All right, I'll be ready in a minute. But I can't take them off without the key."

"Well, use the key, be quick!"

"But I haven't got the key. Venables has got it. He screwed the

skates for me." Jennings looked round the empty yard. "Where has he gone, I wonder!"

"Who, Venables? He's gone into class, I'm sure. I don't think he is going to be late for Old Wilkie's lesson."

"Yes, but... but how does he think I'm going to take off these skates if I haven't I got the key!"

"You'll have to take them off without the "'key," said Darbishire.

Jennings tried to do it, but nothing came out of it.

"I shall never take them off without the key," said Jennings. "Darbi, run to school and see if you can find Venables."

"But there isn't time!" exclaimed Darbishire. "The bell rang hours ago. Old Wilkie may be on his way to the classroom now."

The lesson usually began five minutes after the bell, but a teacher very often came to his classroom early and expected to find his form ready for the lesson.

Jennings looked at his feet again. The only thing he could do was to take off his shoes and skates at the same time. He took off one shoe. There was a large hole in his sock.

"Look at it, Darbi," said Jennings and pointed to the hole. "I'm sure there wasn't a hole this morning."

"Never mind! Take off the other shoe, quick!"

"Yes, of course."

Jennings quickly pulled the lace in the other shoe, but this time he tied it into a tight knot.

"Now look what's happened," Jennings said. "That's what comes when you do something in a hurry: you pull the wrong lace or the wrong end of the right lace."

"Don't talk, Jen. Do something," said Darbishire.

Jennings spent another minute over his shoe and said that he could not do anything.

"I think I've pulled the knot tighter," he said.

The boys could not cut it because neither of them had a penknife in his pocket. They tried to break the lace but could not do it either: the lace was very strong.

"You'll have to leave it till you come into class and find Venables."

"But I can't go and find Venables!" he cried. "I can't go into class in one sock and one roller-skate."

"You can, if you come now, before Old Wilkie comes."

"But he may be there already."

"Yes, I know, but - well, he sometimes gives us some minutes after the bell. If we go now there is still a chance that we'll be there before he comes, but if you are going to talk about it and..."

"Come on then, quick," Jennings agreed. "You carry this other skate and go ahead and see that there is nobody in the corridor."

So with a sock on one foot and a roller-skate on the other Jennings crossed the school yard. When they came up to the door Darbishire went upstairs and saw that there was nobody in the corridor. Sounds of conversation which he heard from the staff room showed that some teachers were still there.

"We'll have to hope that Old Wilkie is still there drinking his coffee," Darbishire whispered when Jennings jumped from one step on to another. "If you jump quickly enough you can skate the rest of the way along the corridor."

Jennings began to jump quicker, and soon the boys were in the corridor. On the polished floor of the corridor the noise that Jennings made with his roller-skate was deafening, and the staff room was very near.

"Don't make such a noise," whispered Darbishire. "The door of the staff room may open at any moment."

"But what can I do?"

"Can't you walk on tiptoe?"

"On tiptoe? On roller-skates? I want to see you..."

"Well, don't talk. Come on!"

When they came up to the classroom the door was open.

"Old Wilkie hasn't come yet," whispered Darbishire. "Come on!"

The boys of Form Three were greatly surprised to see Jennings in one sock and one roller-skate. Everybody began to ask questions. Jennings did not answer any, but went up to Venables' desk.

"Hey, Venables, where's the key to these skates?"

"Oh, sorry," said Venables. "I've got it here in my..." He took out of his pockets two dirty handkerchiefs, a penny, a piece of string, an eraser. "Oh, I remember now; I left it downstairs in the tuck-box room."

"Go and get it at once, then," Jennings said angrily.

"I can't go now. I haven't got time. Old Wilkie will be here in a..."

"He's coming," shouted Atkinson who was standing at the door.

That's awful! What am I going to do?" exclaimed Jennings.

"Go and sit down. He won't notice anything if you keep your feet under the desk," Venables advised.

"Yes, but..."

"I'll get it for you after school. You'll be all right, really."

Mr Wilkins' footsteps behind the door told Jennings that he must not lose a moment. So he jumped and skated to his back-row desk at the window. Behind him was Darbishire with Jennings' left shoe in his hand. He could not think of what to do with it, but suddenly he saw the waste-paper basket in the corner behind the desks and dropped the shoe in it.

Chapter Thirty-Two
Jennings' new post

When Darbishire dropped Jennings' shoe with a roller-skate in the waste-paper basket he saw Mr Wilkins come into the classroom to begin the lesson.

"All right! Now we are going to draw a map which shows the rainfall in Australia," he said and sat down at the teacher's desk. "Open your books at page 57."

"Please, sir, I haven't got a pen," said Atkinson.

"You won't need a pen," answered I Mr Wilkins. "You'll need pencils, erasers and..." His last words reminded him of the last book and stationery inspection, and that, of course, reminded him of Jennings. When he thought about Jennings he remembered of his talk with Mr Carter after breakfast that morning. "All right," he thought, "if I promised Carter to give Jennings the last chance to do something good, I'll do it."

"Now, where's Jennings?" asked Mr Wilkins.

"Here, sir," said a voice by the window.

"Well, listen to me. I've had a talk with some teachers about your behaviour."

Form Three looked at Mr Wilkins. That was much more interesting than the rainfall in Australia.

"So I talked to Mr Carter and the Headmaster, and we decided to give you one last chance."

"Thank you, sir," said Jennings. "If I sit quietly and keep my feet together under the desk," Jennings said to himself, "everything will be all right."

"One last chance," repeated Mr Wilkins. "I'm going to create a new post for you. You will have to see that there is ink in he inkwells, that there is no paper on the floor, and that the blackboard is clean when a teacher comes in to begin a lesson."

"Yes, sir."

"And I expect you will do it all well."

"I'll try, sir," said Jennings. He liked his new post.

"All right!" Mr Wilkins looked at the blackboard and saw a list of French words on it. "You can start at once. Come up and clean the blackboard for me."

Jennings sighed. The blackboard swam before his eyes.

"Do you mean me, sir?" he said. "Shall I go and do it now, sir? This minute, do you mean?"

"Certainly. I want to use the blackboard," said Mr Wilkins. "Are

you going to clean it after the lesson?"

"Yes, sir. May I do it after the lesson, sir, please?"

"But I want to draw a map of Australia now, and not after the lesson."

"Yes, sir. Only I..." Jennings sighed again. He must think of something at once. But he couldn't. "Well, sir,- you see, sir, I don't really want to leave my desk now, sir," he finished.

Mr Wilkins looked at him in surprise.

"What are you talking about, you silly little boy?" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "I'm giving you a last chance to make up for your silly behaviour and you are sitting there and telling me that you don't want to leave your desk. Don't be funny, boy. Come up here when I tell you to!"

Slowly, Jennings stood up from his desk and limped between the desks. He was making a loud noise with his roller-skate on his way to the blackboard.

Mr Wilkins quickly stood up from his desk. His eyes opened wide.

"I-I-I... What - what - what, have you got on your foot, boy!" he cried.

Jennings looked down at his feet.

"This, sir?" he asked. "This is a - it's only a skate, sir."

"Only a skate!" shouted Mr Wilkins.' "Roller-skate in the classroom in the middle of a geography lesson!"

"No, no, sir. You see, Venables left the key in the tuck-box room, and..."

"I - I - I've never in my life seen such -nonsense! Jennings, again! Jennings, as Usual. And look at your other foot! Just look at it!

Jennings looked at it.

"Where is your shoe, boy? Where's your shoe?"

This question Jennings could not answer. But Darbishire could. "Please, sir, it's in the waste-paper basket," said Darbishire. Mr Wilkins looked at Darbishire. He could not speak.

"I'm sorry about the holes in my socks, sir," said Jennings "but they were..."

"This is too much!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "I choose for you a responsible post and you come on one roller-skate, with two holes in your socks and your shoe is in the wastepaper basket. No, this is too much! Now look at your behaviour this term. Smoke in the classroom! Window tapping! Burglars! And that is not enough! You come in a roller-skate into my class! This is too much! Look at yourself!"

Jennings could not look at himself, of course. But Mr Wilkins could. He looked at Jennings and saw that his eyes were moist. So Mr Wilkins decided that he had -said enough.

"Well, you really are a silly little boy, Jennings. And I think that

the day will come when you learn to behave like a clever good boy," finished Mr Wilkins.

"I hope so, sir," said Jennings and went back to his desk.

Chapter Thirty-Three
Jennings' masterpiece

When Jennings' feet were in shoes again, the geography lesson was nearly half over.

"You'll be sorry that you've spent all this time on that nonsense," Mr Wilkins said to the class. "I was going to repeat some important things with you at the end of the lesson for next week's test. But there won't be time for that now - thanks to Jennings."

"Test, sir?" asked Temple in surprise. "What test, sir?"

"The test that I shall give you next week on Australia," said Mr Wilkins. "You must learn the last lesson in your own time because those of you whose work isn't good enough will be - will be..." Mr Wilkins could not think of any punishment. "Well, I'm warning you," he finished.

Jennings decided to do the geography test well. That evening he was going to read the geography textbook for half an hour before bed time. He sat down at a table in the common room and began to read about the climate of Australia, but after ten minutes he turned to Darbishire who was sitting at the other side of the table. ,

"I want to live in Australia," Jennings said to his friend.

"Do you really? Why?"

"You see, when we have winter they have summer. So you can, for example, eat your Christmas dinner in the garden when the sun shines brightly."

"I don't think I'll like it," said Darbishire. "I like snow on my Christmas cards," and he passed Jennings a sheet of paper with a half-finished drawing of a home-made Christmas card. "There aren't many days left before Christmas. So I've already begun to draw some home-made Christmas cards."

Home-made Christmas cards were a popular hobby at the end of the autumn term. Darbishire showed Jennings his first Christmas card which he wanted to send to his grandmother. The people in the card were going round the Christmas tree and singing.

Jennings did not like his friend's drawing.

"Why don't these funny little people eat their Christmas puddings, instead of carrying them on their heads?" he asked.

"You don't understand. These are their hats," explained Darbishire. "Wait till I've coloured the drawing, and then you'll see. I'm going to make a lot of Christmas cards and send them to all my relations."

"But why only Christmas cards?" asked Jennings. "Let's make some

decorations and hang them up in the common room before the Christmas party."

The boys usually had their Christmas party on the last day of the term, and Darbishire liked his friend's idea.

"We can make lanterns and very long paper chains," said Darbishire. "We've got twenty days before the Christmas party. So if each of us makes a yard of paper chain every day that will give forty yards."

"That's nothing," said Jennings. "When we tell the boys about the idea and they all will begin to make paper chains... Let's see now. Seventy-nine boys will work and make a yard a day..."

"I don't think everybody will," said Darbishire. "Let's say fifty. It will be easier to count."

"All right, then, fifty. Fifty boys will make twenty yards a day. Oh, a thousand yards!"

"That's wonderful!" exiaimed Darbishire. "The common room with more than half a mile of coloured paper chains will be beautiful."

"More than half a mile! If we put it in a line the chain will go from the school to Linbury village," said Jennings.

"But where can we get all that paper?" asked Darbishire.

"We'll go through all the waste-paper baskets and use the wrapping-paper from boys' parcels," answered Jennings. "And if that isn't enough we'll..." He looked at his geography exercise-book. "Well, what about old exercise-books?"

"I don't think the teachers will like that," 1 said Darbishire.

"I don't see why not. We don't use our old exercise-books, do we?"

"I know, but..."

"Take this old geography exercise-book, for example. I finished it this afternoon, and I'll begin a new exercise-book next lesson. So why can't I use this exercise-book for a paper 1 chain? We throw away a lot of old exercise-books at the end of every term."

When Jennings and Darbishire explained their plan most of the boys of Linbury Boarding School liked it very much. After a long conversation the boys decided to decorate with I paper chains not only the common room, but the corridors, too. They also organized a corn petition to see which dormitory could make more paper chains. Then the boys went to Mr Carter and asked for his permission.

"All right," said Mr Carter. "But here are two things that I want to warn you about. First. You must use only waste paper for your chains. Second. You mustn't begin to hang up your decorations till the day of the party."

The boys agreed, and the next day nearly all the boys were busy making paper chains:

they cut paper into strips, coloured them and gummed the ends

together.

Soon they had used all the waste paper that they could find and had to look for some more. They used newspapers, magazines and letters from home.

All the free time that was left from decorations the boys spent on drawing Christmas cards.

Atkinson was drawing a Christmas card for his favourite uncle when Jennings came into Form Three classroom before Mr Wilkins' geography lesson on Friday afternoon. He looked at Atkinson's card.

"What a funny pillar-box you are drawing!" said Jennings.

"It isn't a pillar-box," said Atkinson. "What you call a pillar-box is Father Christmas. See? You don't know anything about art, Jennings."

"Well, I bet I could draw a better man," said Jennings.

"I bet you couldn't!" said Atkinson. "Do your best drawing of a man and we'll ask somebody to say if it's better than my Father Christmas."

Jennings opened his desk and began to look for pencil and paper.

"All right," he agreed. "Wait till I find something to draw on, and I'll show you."

He could not find anything but some brown paper which he wanted to use for the decorations. So he got a pile of exercise-books out of the desk, took one and opened it at a clean page.

"Hey, you can't draw in this, Jen,- not in your geography exercise-book," Atkinson warned him.

"I can rub it out," said Jennings and began to draw the head and shoulders of a middle-aged man. The drawing was very poor: the ears were too large, the eyes were like marbles, the neck was too short.

But when Darbishire saw the drawing he was sure that he knew that man. "I say, Jen, that is a good picture. I've recognized him at once."

Jennings looked up in surprise. It was only a drawing of a man's head. "Recognized whom?" he asked.

"Well, I know who you meant," said Darbishire and began to laugh. He called the boys who were coming into the classroom for afternoon school. "Hey, Venables! Temple! Come here and look at old Jen's drawing. It's wonderful." The boys gathered round Jennings' desk.

"Do you recognize the man?" asked Darbishire.

Like Jennings, Temple and Venables could not recognize the man in the picture.

"Is it a snowman?" asked Temple.

"No, try again," said Darbishire. He was surprised that nobody could recognize the man.

Temple looked at the picture again. No, I he could not recognize

the man. It was just a man. That's all. "Old Wilkie," he said for fun.

"Of course!" exclaimed Darbishire. "Who else? Of course it's Old Wilkie!"

There was certainly no resemblance between Jennings' picture and Mr Wilkins. But the boys were only too ready to recognize him in the drawing. Temple was happy with his guess. Venables did not want to say anything against Jennings' drawing because Jennings was expecting a parcel of food from his Aunt Angela. Atkinson did not like Mr Wilkins and was only too happy to see a caricature of him.

"Yes, so it is. I can see it now," said Venables and laughed loudly to show that he liked the picture.

"I can't understand why I couldn't see it before," said Atkinson. "It's a masterpiece, if you ask me."

Jennings was happy.

"Well, it isn't a masterpiece," he said modestly. "But I think it's not a bad picture of Old Wilkie."

Now he decided to make the picture funnier. He drew a balloon coming out of the man's mouth and in it he wrote the words, I-I-I... You, silly little boy!

When the bell for the afternoon school rang the other boys of Form Three came into the classroom. At once Darbishire showed them the masterpiece.

"Come and look at it," he said to Jones and Crosby. "Do you know who it is?"

Jones looked at the exercise-book and smiled. The drawing meant nothing to him, but when he read the words he said, "Yes, of course. It's Old Wilkie."

"You see," cried Darbishire. "If Jones recognizes it, everybody will."

Jennings was happy. Now he himself was Sure that it was Old Wilkie's picture, and he wrote under the drawing L. P. Wilkins.

Chapter Thirty-Four
The geography test

When Jennings finished writing the last letter under his drawing Mr Wilkins himself arrived to begin the lesson. Quickly Jennings turned over the page. Mr Wilkins must never see the caricature.

The boys began the geography test and worked on it during nearly all the lesson. Jennings was ready for the test and soon he found that he could answer most of the questions well enough. So he finished the tests ten minutes before the end of the lesson.

That was very good because it meant that he had some time to think what to do with his masterpiece. If Mr Wilkins mustn't see his portrait he must rub it out before Mr Wilkins stood up to take in the boys' exercise-books at the end of the lesson.

At the same time Jennings did not want to rub out the drawing. He wanted to show it to some other boys of Linbury Boarding School who, he was sure, would like it too.

"I'm sorry I've chosen my geography exercise-book to draw Old Wilkie's portrait," thought Jennings. "But how did I know that I could draw a masterpiece? Maybe I'll cut the page out."

He looked at the teacher's desk. Mr Wilkins was reading something. Now was the time!

Jennings opened his desk and put the exercise-book into it. "If Old Wilkie looks at me, he will think that I'm taking my books and exercise-books for the next lesson," Jennings thought. From a box in his desk he took his penknife and opened it.

"Jennings!" Mr Wilkins' voice rang so suddenly that the boy jumped. "What are you doing inside that desk?" Jennings quickly shut" the exercise-book. "I-I wasn't really doing anything, sir."

"Don't talk to me over the top of a desk!"

Jennings closed the desk.

"What's that penknife doing in your hand?"

"This penknife, sir? Well, you see, I've, finished the test, and now 1 have nothing to do, and I am... cutting a piece of paper, sir!"

"Cutting a piece of paper! Again these Christmas decorations! It's bad enough that you boys spend all your free time on this nonsense, and I'm certainly not going to let you do it in class, whether you've finished your work or not."

"No, sir."

"Bring that penknife to me. I shall confiscate it."

Very slowly Jennings went to the teacher's desk and put the penknife on it.

"Will you give it back to me at the end of the term?" he asked.

"I haven't decided it yet," was the answer.

"But sir..."

"Don't argue with me. Be quiet; the other boys are still working," Mr Wilkins said. "If you've finished the test you can leave the room and stay in the corridor till the end of the lesson."

"It was bad luck about the penknife," Jennings said to himself in the corridor. "I may get it back before the holidays or may not. You never know with Mr Wilkins. The only thing I can do is to be decent to him for a week and then ask him to give me back the penknife."

Jennings was not worried about the drawing, because when the lesson was over he could go back into the classroom and... The bell rang and a moment later Mr Wilkins came out of the classroom with a pile of exercise-books under his arm.

In a state of wild panic Jennings ran into the classroom. "Who collected the exercise-books after the test?" he shouted.

"I did. Old Wilkie told me to," answered Bromwich. "Don't worry about your exercise-, book. When I saw it wasn't on the top of your desk, I looked for it inside and I found it."

"What?" exclaimed Jennings. "You - you mean you took my exercise-book and gave it to Old Wilkie?"

"Well, of course, I did," said Bromwich. "You want Old Wilkie to correct your test, don't you?"

The horror swept over Jennings.

"Why did you want to do a thing 1 that, Bromo?"

Bromwich looked at him in surprise.

"I did no harm when I got your exercise-book out of your desk, did I?" said Bromwich,

"No harm!" exclaimed Jennings. "Oh, no! No harm! You've only given Sir a caricature on himself with his name under it in large letters."

"I'm very sorry," said Bromwich. "But how could I know?"

"Everybody knew," said Jennings. "Everybody saw it before the lesson."

But Bromwich really was the only boy who did not see it.

There was no time to talk about it because at that moment Mr Carter arrived to begin an English lesson. And all the time during the next two lessons Jennings was thinking about his drawing.

"I must get my exercise-book back before Old Wilkie begins to correct it," thought Jennings. "By hook or by crook."

Chapter Thirty-Five
Jennings' plan to get back his exercise-book

When the lessons were over at the end of afternoon school Jennings hurried along the corridor to the staff room. He found Mr Wilkins in an arm-chair. He was thinking over a crossword puzzle. On the table near him was the pile of Form Three's geography exercise-books.

"Sir, please, sir, may I have my geography exercise-book for a minute, sir?" Jennings asked.

Mr Wilkins didn't even look up from his crossword puzzle. "Of course you can't have it back now. You will have it back when I've corrected it," he answered.

"But, sir, it's very important. I've just remembered something."

"You know quite well that you can't make any changes when the test is over. Well, you could look up the right answers and..."

"Oh, no, it's not that," said Jennings. "I don't want to change anything I've written 111 the test, sir."

"Then why do you want your book back?"

"Well, sir, I - I..." There was no short answer to this question. "I just want to have It back," finished Jennings.

"I don't understand, boy, what you are talking about. You'll have your book back tomorrow when I've corrected the test and not before."

"Thank you, sir," said Jennigs and slowly went out of the staff room.

He came back to his classroom where three of his friends were looking for some paper to make paper chains.

"Something awful has happened," he said and then told Darbishire, Temple and Atkinson the whole story.

"And his name under the portrait in big letters, too!" exclaimed Darbishire. "What are you going to do?"

"It's a pity you made the drawing so funny," said Atkinson. "His ears are not as big as you made them, Jen."

"And his eyes are not so big, either," said Temple.

"And the words in the balloon about silly little boy! I can understand what he'll say when he sees it."

"He mustn't see it," Jennings cried. "I must get my exercise-book back and rub out the picture while there is still time."

But it was very difficult to do, of course. Nobody could tell when Mr Wilkins was going to correct the tests, when Jennings could rub out the drawing or when the staff room was empty and the teachers were in other parts of the building.

"I shall go to the staff room after tea with an eraser and knock on the door," said Jennings.

"And what if there are any teachers there?" asked Darbishire.

"Then I shall - I shall..." Jennings thought" for a moment. "I shall say something like:

Do they think the weather will be fine tomorrow. And then I'll go back and try again later."

"And they may be there when you go back again. And you can't go all evening and ask them about the weather every five minutes," said Atkinson.

"Well, you think of something better then," said Jennings. "All of you! All think of something."

They thought!... And for some minutes they did not say a word. It was Jennings' fault, of course, but they wished to do all they could to help him.

"I think we must all help you," said Temple.

"Thank you, but how?" asked Jennings

"One of us will go to the staff room," Temple began to explain his plan, "and if he finds that there are any teachers there, he will make his excuse and come back. Then the second one will do the same. Then the third. Then the fourth. But I'm sure one of us will succeed."

The boys thought it was a good idea. They decided that Mr Wilkins was not going to correct the tests till the boys were in bed, because he was on duty that evening. So the best time for them was during the half hour, before the dormitory bell, when the teacher on duty usually walked round the building.

"That's what we'll do, then," Jennings decided. "We'll synchronize our watches, because we mustn't all go there at the same time, and we'll draw names out of a hat to see who goes first."

So they wrote their names on pieces of paper and put them in a pencil-box (they had no hat). Then Jennings drew the pieces of paper.

"We'll go at five-minute intervals," he said

"The first will knock on the door of the staff room at nineteen thirty-five."

"What time is that?" asked Atkinson.

"Twenty-five minutes to eight, of course. If the staff room is empty he rubs out the drawing and reports to the others that he has done the work. If there is somebody there, of course, he makes his excuse and goes away, and the next one will go five minutes later."

"I can never think of a good excuse when I need it," said Darbishire.

"Then begin to think now," said Jennings. "It isn't difficult. One of us can ask him to sign his autograph book..."

"A very good excuse," said everybody.

"...and somebody else can ask him..." For the moment he could not think of another good excuse. "Well, somebody else can ask him something else; it doesn't matter what. The main thing is we all four go at different • times and all have different excuses. We must do it, by hook or by crook."

The tea bell rang and the boys went to the dining hall. They all liked their plan which really was very good. But it was a pity that they did not have time to think of different excuses which they could use.

At half past seven that evening Mr Wilkins put his crossword puzzle on the table and stood up from his armchair. "It's time for me to walk round the school and see what those boys are doing," he said to Mr Hind who was also in the staff room.

"What if I ask you to change duties with me?" said Mr Hind. "A friend of mine has invited me to the cinema tomorrow night when I must be on duty, and I'm looking for somebody to change duties with me."

"All right," agreed Mr Wilkins. "It'll give me a chance to correct Form Three's geography test." Mr Wilkins sat down again, and Mr Hind left the room. "Form Three's geography test! Yes, of course, I'll begin it at once," decided Mr Wilkins. He looked at the table and saw his unfinished crossword puzzle. "Maybe I'll finish that first."

He took the crossword puzzle from the table. The most difficult was number 17 down. He began to think what it could be.

Chapter Thirty-Six
Autograph hunt

At twenty-five minutes to eight there was a knock on the staff room door.

"Come in!" called Mr Wilkins.

The visitor was Temple. When he saw that the room was not empty he took an autograph book from his pocket.

"Please, sir, write something in my book, please, sir," he asked.

That was not an unusual thing for Mr Wilkins.

"Do you only want my signature?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. Of course, you can write something else, if you like, sir," said Temple. "Something like, for example: By hook or by crook I'll be first in your book, sir." , "All right. Leave the book here. I'll do it later."

Temple sadly went out of the room. It was too bad. Old Wilkie was there. But he had done what he could.

At twenty minutes to eight Mr Wilkins again heard a knock on the door. This time the visitor was Darbishire. He stood half in the room and half out of the door with an eraser in his hand.

"What's the matter, Darbishire? Do you want to see me?"

"N-no, sir. I didn't think you were here. sir."

Mr Wilkins frowned. "My dear boy, if you don't want to see me and you thought I wasn't here, why did you knock on the door?"

"I - I... just wondered whether you could write something in my autograph book."

Mr Wilkins was surprised. Two boys asking him to write in their autograph books on one evening!

"You can write anything you like, sir, said Darbishire. "Like: By hook or by crook I'll be first in your book."

"I'm busy now," answered Mr Wilkins. "I certainly want to be first in your book. Bu1 you'll have to wait till I finish my cross - till I finish correcting your geography exercise-books."

"Our geography exercise-books!" exclaimed Darbishire. "You haven't corrected them, then, sir?"

"No, Darbishire, I haven't. And if any more people come and knock on the door. I'm sure, I shall not finish them this evening."

"Excuse me, sir," said Darbishire, put his autograph book on the table and left the room.

Five minutes passed during which Mr Wilkins could not find the answer to 17 down. He left it and began to think about 29 down.

Then Atkinson arrived. "Oh, you are here, sir! I thought maybe there wasn't anybody here," he said. "I mean I thought you were on

duty this evening."

"Oh, I see," Mr Wilkins said with a suspicion. "And so you decided to come into the staff room to see what it looks like when it is empty, didn't you?"

"Oh, no, sir. I remember now. I really wanted to see you, sir." He took an autograph book from his pocket. "I wondered whether you could write something in this book for me, sir? Just something like: By hook or by crook I'll be first in your book. And then if you sign..." He looked up at Mr Wilkins' expression and stopped.

"What game are you silly little boys playing?" the teacher asked angrily. He was sure that all those visitors were going to make fun of him. "You come to the staff room, find me here and then tell me that you haven't expected to see me here."

"No, sir, it isn't so, really, sir."

"And these autograph books! Somebody must think I'm a film star!"

Atkinson looked down at his shoes and said nothing.

"I've had enough nonsense about autograph books for one evening," Mr Wilkins continued. "And if anyone else comes and knocks at the door, I'll - I'll... Well, they'd better not."

"Yes, sir... No, sir," said Atkinson and ran out of the room.

In the library he met Darbishire and Temple.

"I shall not go there any more," said Atkinson. "He is ready to go off like an H-bomb."

"He wasn't too bad when I was there," Temple said. "I just asked for his autograph and..."

"You did what?" asked Atkinson.

"I asked for his autograph. It was the only thing I could think of," answered Temple.

"Why did you do it? You knew that I was going to ask him for his autograph," said Atkinson.

"No, I didn't. You never told me," said Temple. "Do you mean that you asked for his autograph, too?"

"Yes, of course, I did," said Atkinson. "Now I can see why he is so angry - because both of us made the same excuse."

Darbishire looked at his friends sadly and said, "Not only both of you - all three of us. I only hope that Jennings has got some other excuses for him when he goes to see him."

"I think we must warn him," said Temple. "Let's go and see if we can find him before it's too late."

It was already too late. When the three boys came to the common room they did not find Jennings there.

"Well, he has already gone," Atkinson looked at his watch. "There is nothing more we can do. I only hope that he will be all right."

The clock on the wall of the staff room stood at ten minutes to eight when, for the fourth time in twenty minutes, there was a knock on the door.

"Come in!" Mr Wilkins shouted in an angry voice.

But nobody came in. Because when Jennings heard Mr Wilkins' voice he understood that the room was not empty and decided to run away.

Mr Wilkins shouted again. Then he stood up from his arm-chair, quickly crossed the room and opened the door. He looked out into the corridor and saw a boy disappearing round the corner.

"Stop! Come back, that boy!" he shouted.

After a short time Jennings appeared.

"Did you call me, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, I did. Did you knock at the staff room door?"

"Do you mean just now, sir?"

"Of course I mean just now. You don't think I meant last term, do you?"

"No, sir. Well, you see I just tapped on it, sir, if you see what I mean."

"I see. Then why did you run away and not come in when I told you?"

"I ... I ... changed my mind at the last moment, sir. I decided not to come in. You see, I was going to ask you to write something in my autograph book. Something like. By hook or by crook..."

"What!" shouted Mr Wilkins. "This is too much for me! I've had enough of this nonsense! And if you are not out of my sight in a moment, Jennings, then by hook or by crook you'll be first in the detention book!"

"Yes, sir," said Jennings and ran along the corridor.

When Mr Wilkins turned to the door he met Mr Hind who was coming back to the staff room.

"Have you finished correcting your tests?" asked Mr Hind.

"No," answered Mr Wilkins. "I think I'll wait till morning. There is too much noise at this time of the day."

"But the Headmaster asked us to give him the results of all the tests at once. So I really think you have to give him the results of the test tomorrow morning, by hook or by crook," said Mr Hind.

Mr Wilkins looked at him angrily.

"Will you please not use that idiotic expression, Hind," he said angrily. "I've had enough of that expression on the last twenty minutes to last me quite a long time."

He went into the staff room and shut the door loudly.

Chapter Thirty-Seven
Jennings' new plan

It was a sad evening for Jennings. Temple and Atkinson did not want to go to the staff room again and meet Mr Wilkins. Even Darbishire, Jennings' best friend, had no wish to meet Mr Wilkins again.

"I will watch if you decide to try again," Darbishire said to his friend.

"But there is no time to try again," said Jennings. "Maybe he is correcting our tests now."

"No, he isn't," said Darbishire. "He told me he wouldn't do it till tomorrow morning."

When Jennings was in bed he began to think of a new plan for the morning.

"Yes," he thought, "there is still a chance for me to rub out the drawing before breakfast, It is a good time to do it, because there will certainly be no teachers in the staff room before breakfast. But it is also the time of my piano practice. In the next room Mr Wilkins will certainly notice it if I stop playing for more than one minute."

Suddenly a wonderful idea came in to his head. Of course! With a little help from Darbishire he could do it!

"Hey, Darbi, wake up!" he called to his friend in a whisper. "I have a wonderful plan."

"Yes?" came a sleepy voice from the next bed.

"I know how to rub out that drawing. I couldn't think how to do it and then suddenly a wonderful idea came into my head."

"Well, what happened after a wonderful idea came into your head?"

"Well, Old Wilkie usually knocks on the wall if I stop practising for more than half a minute. So I think I will ask somebody to go on playing Beethoven's Minuet in G, and I'll go to the staff room.

"If you think I can play it you can think again," said Darbishire. "I can play only An Easy Piece for Little Fingers."

"But I don't want you to play. There is a record of that piece in the music room."

"What record, An Easy Piece for Little . Fingers?"

"No, Beethoven's Minuet in G. Mr Hind played it to me during my music lesson some weeks ago. So all you have to do is..."

"Hey! Stop whispering and go to sleep."

That was the voice of Bromwich, the dormitory monitor.

Jennings had to stop talking. "Never mind," thought Jennings.

"When the time comes Darbi will understand what he has to do."

* * *

At half past seven the next morning Jennings went into the music room and began to play Beethoven's Minuet in G. Soon he stopped playing and listened. In half a minute he heard a knock on the wall. Yes, Mr Wilkins was listening, Jennings began to play again.

Jennings smiled to himself as he turned back to the keyboard. Everything was all right!

Five minutes later Darbishire ran into the music room.

"Here I am," he whispered. "What do I have to do?"

Jennings stopped playing and answered, "Do you see that cupboard in the corner? There is a pile of records on the top shelf, and among them you'll find Beethoven's Minuet in G."

"I don't understand why you can't do it yourself," said Darbishire and opened the cupboard.

The answer to this question was a loud knock on the other side of the wall.

"That's why I can't do it myself," Jennings pointed to the wall and began the Minuet again.

Soon Darbishire found the record and put it on the record-player. Then he switched on the record-player and whispered, "Say when."

Jennings stopped playing and jumped to his feet. "Start now!" he said.

At once the boys heard Beethoven's Minuet in G. There was a difference, of course, between Jennings' playing and the playing of a famous pianist on the record. But for the boys there was no difference. They were happy with their idea.

"Wonderful, isn't it!" exclaimed Darbishire. "It sounds just like you playing. I'm sure Old Wilkie will like it. He'll think-"

"Be quiet, Darbi. I'm in a hurry." Jennings went to the door. "Maybe I'll come back before the record has finished, but if I'm not, start it playing again."

Jennings hurried from the room. The sounds of Beethoven's Minuet in G followed him along the corridor to the staff room.

* * *

Mr Wilkins did not listen to Jennings' playing attentively. He was quite happy that the boy played without stopping. So the record-player had been playing for half a minute before Mr Wilkins realized

that something unusual was happening.

To his surprise he began to sing the melody - a thing he had never done before. Now he realized that the music sounded quite different: the boy was improving!

Chapter Thirty-Eight
Jennings gets back his exercise-book

Mr Wilkins went out of his room and in the corridor he met Mr Carter.

"I say, come and listen to this!" Mr Wilkins said. "For many weeks that boy, Jennings, has been driving me out of my mind with his awful playing of the Minuet in G.

"I'm not surprised," answered Mr Carter. "I know what Hind thinks about Jennings' playing."

"Well, but we are wrong. The boy's playing is wonderful. Listen to how he is playing now."

Mr Carter listened for some moments and then said, "You are not trying to tell me that that's Jennings playing the piano?"

"Wonderful, isn't it?"

"It's more than wonderful - it's impossible," said Mr Carter.

"You see. Carter, I've often noticed how some of these boys quite suddenly..."

And then, quite suddenly, an awful thing happened. The needle stuck in a worn groove and began to repeat the same notes again and again.

Of course, Darbishire had to watch the record-player, but it so happened that at that moment he was on the far side of the room looking out of the window. He .ran to the record-player and released the needle from the groove... But it was too late.

"What-what... It's impossible!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "If that silly little boy thinks he can sit there, listening to records when he must practise..."

He did not finish the sentence, but hurried to the music room and opened the door. "Jennings!" he shouted. "Why are you -?"

And then he stopped because he didn't see Jennings in the room. He saw Darbishire who was trying to hide himself behind the cupboard.

"Darbishire! What are you doing in here?"

Mr Wilkins shouted.

"I was just-I was just listening to the music," answered Darbishire.

•

"Oh, were you? And where's Jennings?"

Darbishire looked round the room as if trying to find his friend.

"He... he.. he is not here," he had to say.

"I can see that, you silly little boy! I want to know where he's gone."

"He had to go to.. he had to go to..."

"To the staff room?"

Darbishire did not answer, but Mr Wilkins knew that he was right.

"I see," said Mr Wilkins. "Some funny business is going on," he decided. "And that nonsense about autograph books last night. There must be something in it."

Mr Wilkins realized that the boys wanted to visit the staff room when he was not there. Why they wanted to do so Mr Wilkins did not know... But he was going to find out!

He told Darbishire to go back to his dormitory and told Mr Carter about his suspicions.

"Jennings, as usual!" he said angrily. "He's put the record on to make me believe that he is in the room playing the piano."

"Yes, I think so, too," said Mr Carter. "Are you going to find out what is going on?"

"I certainly am!" said Mr Wilkins and hurried along the corridor to the staff room.

* * *

When Jennings came into the staff room he hurried to the table where he expected to find Form Three's geography exercise-books. But there were no geography exercise-books on the table. He began to look for them, and it took him two or three minutes to find them under a newspaper on the floor behind an arm-chair. It took him another minute to find his exercise-book. And when he put his hand into the pocket to take out an eraser, he heard footsteps in the corridor. To run away was impossible. "Maybe the footsteps will pass," he thought. "Maybe!..."

But at that moment the door opened and Mr Wilkins hurried into the staff room.

"Jennings! So I thought!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "What are you doing in here?"

"Nothing, really, sir. I just wanted my geography exercise-book back before you've corrected the test, sir."

"And I told you yesterday that you couldn't have it."

"I know, sir. Only I made a - a - a mistake, sir. You see, I wasn't in the classroom when you collected the exercise-books, and Bromwich took my exercise-book out of my desk before I -"

"All right, that's enough. Give the exercise-, book to me. I'll see this mistake myself," said

Mr Wilkins and began to turn over the pages of Jennings'

geography exercise-book.

Jennings did not dare to look at Mr Wilkins. Now he would see his portrait... But he didn't!

Mr Wilkins turned over the last page and gave the exercise-book back to Jennings.

"That isn't the right exercise-book," he said. "There is no geography test in it."

For a moment Jennings did not know what to say. Then he looked at the exercise-book and saw that it was his old geography exercise-book. "When Bromwich was looking for it in my desk," Jennings thought, "he took the first geography exercise-book that he saw. So the exercise-book with the test must still be in my desk. And that is the exercise-book in which I have drawn the caricature of Old Wilkie!"

Jennings was happy!

"Yes, sir, this is my old exercise-book. Bromwich collected it by mistake. May I go and get the exercise-book in which I. did the test, sir?"

"Yes, if you want me to correct it," said Mr Wilkins.

Mr Wilkins was surprised. "Boys are strange creatures," he thought. "Why couldn't this silly little boy say that Bromwich had taken the wrong exercise-book? Why did he do all those things with autograph books and a record-player? To get back his old exercise-book and put the new one in its place? No, I can't understand these silly creatures."

"Go and get it at once!" said Mr Wilkins. "And I only hope that you are going to keep your new exercise-book more tidily than your old one."

"Yes, sir, you may be sure that it will be very clean," said Jennings and his fingers closed on the eraser in his trouser pocket when he left the staff room.

Chapter Thirty-Nine
Mr Wilkins is angry because he has lost his fountain-pen

Jennings went to the classroom, found the geography exercise-book with the test, rubbed out his masterpiece and gave the exercise-book to Mr Wilkins.

After that he could turn to more pleasant things such as the decorations for the Christmas party.

They had already made more paper chains than they needed, and it was more and more difficult to hide them. The boys remembered that Mr Carter had not allowed them to hang up the paper chains till the day of the party.

"We must do something about it," Jennings decided when he was going into the dining hall for breakfast.

When Darbishire saw him he ran up to him.

"What happened, Jen? Did you get your exercise-book back? Did Old Wilkie come in and catch you?" asked Darbishire.

"Yes, he did, but it didn't matter," answered Jennings.

"Didn't matter! But what-?"

"Bromo collected my old exercise-book by mistake - without the drawing."

"That's fine," said Darbishire. "I just didn't know what to do. You see, the needle stuck in a groove and Old Wilkie came in and -"

"Well, never mind," said Jennings. "I'm worrying about the decorations for the common room. I think we've made more paper chains than we need."

"It's a pity we have to stop making more decorations. I wanted to do a fringe round the lamp-shade in the common room."

"Well, do it, if you wanted to."

"I can't. I've looked into all the waste-paper baskets and there isn't any more paper anywhere."

As usual, Jennings could think of something useful. "You can use my old geography exercise-book for it," said Jennings, "the exercise-book that Old Wilkie has just given me back."

"You don't need it, do you?" asked Darbishire.

"No, I don't need it any more. So you can use it for something useful."

"A good idea!" Darbishire agreed.

It so happened that it was not a good idea, but Jennings could understand it only ten days later.

* * *

As the end of the term was coming nearer the teachers were busy writing reports, and the boys were busy packing their things to be ready to go home.

When Jennings was packing his things he suddenly remembered about an important thing that he must do.

"I've nearly forgotten," he said to Temple. "Old Wilkie hasn't given me back the penknife that he confiscated during the geography test."

"I think you have to go to the staff room now and ask him for the penknife," said Temple.

"I'll go after dinner," said Jennings. "I think he'll be in a good mood after dinner."

But Mr Wilkins was not in a good mood after dinner. And when Mr Carter came into the staff room after dinner to collect the teachers' reports he found Mr Wilkins looking for something.

"I haven't begun writing my reports, Carter," said Mr Wilkins. "I can't find my fountain-pen anywhere."

"You've chosen a bad moment to lose it. The Headmaster asked me to collect the reports and give them to him at once," said Mr Carter. "Are you sure you've looked properly?"

"Of course I've looked properly. I've looked everywhere. I can't think where it can be. I know I had it when I took some paper from the stationery cupboard yesterday morning, but where..."

There was a knock on the door. And when

Jennings came into the staff room Mr Wilkins was certainly not in a good mood.

"Well, what's the matter, Jennings? asked Mr Carter.

"Sir, please, sir, may I speak to Mr Wilkins?"

"I am not sure, Jennings," answered Mr Carter. "Mr Wilkins is very busy now. He is looking for his fountain-pen."

"Oh! Is it a red fountain-pen that he has lost, sir?"

Mr Wilkins turned to Jennings.

"Yes, it is!" he said. "have you seen it?"

"Oh, yes, I've seen it, sir."

"That's fine! Where is it then?"

"I don't know, sir," answered Jennings. "I only mean I've seen it - well, hundreds of times, in class and in your pocket, sir."

Mr Wilkins turned to the table again.

"But if you can't find it you can take mine," Jennings said quickly. "I shall be very happy to give it to you, sir."

"No, thank you, Jennings," answered Mr Wilkins.

"I was only trying to do you a favour, sir," said Jennings. "Because, you see, I hope you will do me a favour, too, sir."

"Can't you see that I've no time for favours?" said Mr Wilkins angrily. "Can't you see that I'm busy?"

Jennings decided to try again.

"It will not take you a minute, sir," he said. "You see, I wonder if you can give me back my penknife that you confiscated, sir."

Mr Wilkins frowned. He usually gave back the confiscated things at the end of the term. At the same time, he was certainly not going to give Jennings back his penknife when Jennings wanted it.

"Please, boy, I don't want to hear this nonsense about penknives when I've got more important things to think about."

"Excuse me, sir," said Jennings and left the staff room.

"Why can't Old Wilkie be decent to me?" Jennings thought as he closed the staff room door behind him. "Maybe he is not going to give me the penknife back at all. But by hook or by crook I must get it back."

* * *

"Excuse me, Wilkins," Mr Carter said when Jennings left the room, "but the Headmaster asked me to have a talk with you about tomorrow's party. He thinks it will be better if we start the party with a surprise."

"What surprise?" asked Mr Wilkins.

"Oh, nothing very special," answered Mr Carter, "he just thought that if you were to come in to tea dressed as Father Christmas -"

"What!" exclaimed Mr Wilkins. "Me! Father Christmas! Well, I - I..."

"I don't think it's difficult, Wilkins. I've done it myself many times," said Mr Carter. "We have a robe for Father Christmas, a beard..."

"Well, why can't you be Father Christmas if you like the idea? And you've done it many times before," said Mr Wilkins.

"I'll be busy organizing the party. And during tea I shall have to announce that an important visitor has arrived. Then you'll come in from the kitchen smiling," explained Mr Carter. "After that you'll cut the cake and give a piece to each boy."

Mr Wilkins was not happy about it. "And my reports?" he asked.

"You will not write your report during the party, even if you find your pen. And if you don't I'll give you mine. It's better than Jennings'!"

Mr Wilkins could not think of any more excuses

"All right," he said. "I'll play Father Christmas if you think that I

have nothing better to do on the last day of the term."

* * *

When Jennings came up to the common room five minutes later, he was still trying to think of something that could make Mr Wilkins happy.

In the common room he found Darbishire drawing another Christmas card.

"Now I know what to do," said Jennings.

"What are you talking about?" asked Darbishire in surprise.

"You see, Old Wilkie is very angry today. He's got my penknife and doesn't want to give it back. So I wanted to think of something that could make him happy. And now I know what I'll do."

"What?"

"I'll make a Christmas card and send it to him. I'm sure he'll like it."

Chapter Forty
Jennings tries to make Mr Wilkins happy

The bell for the end of school the next morning meant not only that lessons were over for the term, but also that the boys could start hanging up their home-made decorations.

They quickly brought their paper chains, lanterns and other things to the common room, and soon all the walls and the ceiling were covered with decorations.

"It's a pity we are going home tomorrow," Temple said to Atkinson. "The common room looks so nice now - and we only look at it for half an hour before tea."

The news of Jennings' wish to send Mr Wilkins a Christmas card quickly spread among the members of Form Three. They gathered round Jennings to see the Christmas card.

When it was ready Jennings said, "I'm going to send it by air-mail." The boys looked at him in surprise when he crossed the common room, went up to the window and looked out. The staff room was on the ground floor ten yards away, and the wall ran at right angles to where Jennings was standing at the common room window on the first floor.

The window of the staff room was open at the top and Jennings could see Mr Wilkins at the table.

"Come here, boys!" Jennings said to his friends. "You are going to see something interesting."

With these words Jennings took the Christmas card and made a dart out of it. On one of its sides he wrote: To Mr Wilkins from Jennings.

Then he opened the common room window and launched the dart. At first the boys were sure that the dart would hit the wall far from the window, but at the last moment it skimmed through the open window into the staff room.

All the boys were happy.

"Hurray! Hurray!" they shouted.

"Go away from the window," said Jennings. "If he turns and sees us smiling at him it'll spoil the surprise."

The boys went from the window but Jennings stayed and told them what was happening in the staff room.

"He is taking it from the floor," he said in a whisper. "He is looking at it now."

"Is he reading it?" asked Darbishire.

"No, he's looking up at this window. He's guessed where it came

from."

"That's fine," said Atkinson. "I expect he'll come up to you during the party and say thank you."

"I'm sure old Sir will be happy," said Darbishire, "and he will certainly give you back your penknife."

"We'll soon know about it," said Jennings. "He's just gone out of the room and I think he's coming up here."

But the boys were wrong. Jennings' dart did not make Mr Wilkins happy. Moreover, it made him angry. "What game are these boys playing throwing pieces of paper into the staff room?" he said to himself.

He took the dart from the floor, looked at it for a moment and did not even notice that it was a Christmas card. But he noticed that the dart was made from a page of a school drawing album. And this made him even angrily.

When he came into the common room the boys understood from his expression that Mr Wilkins was not happy. For a moment he looked at the paper chains which were hanging from wall to wall. Then he said, "Which of you silly little boys is throwing pieces of paper into the staff room?" The boys were surprised. "Oh, but, sir, you don't understand..." Jennings began.

"So it was you, wasn't it? Jennings, as usual," Mr Wilkins interrupted him. "How dare you throw waste-paper into the staff room! Do you think it's a waste-paper basket?"

"That wasn't waste-paper, sir," said Jennings. "It was a sheet of my drawing album that I've done a Christmas card on - specially for you, sir."

"To put you in a good mood, sir," said Darbishire.

"What did you say, Darbishire?" "I mean we wanted to make you happy." Mr Wilkins was surprised. Now he began to see it all in a different light.

"I see. I didn't understand it was a Christmas card," he said in a kind voice. "Thank you very much! But I've told you often enough, Jennings, that exercise-books and drawing albums cost a lot of money to..."

At that moment an unhappy thing happened. Mr Wilkins made a wide sweep with is arm and broke a paper chain above his head. At once paper chains fell on him like a rain of flowers. He began to drop paper chains from his shoulders on to the floor when he saw something that made him stop dropping paper chains on the floor. Like all the homemade decorations, the piece which Mr Wilkins "held in his hand was made from strips of paper and then coloured. But the red and blue colours could not hide the words on the paper. And Mr

Wilkins read: "Wool is the chief product of Australia."

Mr Wilkins became angry again. "What does this mean?" he asked angrily. "How dare you silly little boys to use your exercise-books to make these silly decorations?"

"It's not my exercise-book, sir," said Temple.

"It's not mine, either. I only used old newspapers, sir," said Atkinson.

"But it's the exercise-book of some boy in Form Three," said Mr Wilkins. "So whose exercise-book is it?"

"Please, sir, I think that piece is from my exercise-book," said Jennings.

"You silly little boy!"

"But it was my old exercise-book, sir," Jennings explained, "and I didn't need it any more because it was the end of the term, sir."

Mr Wilkins nearly danced with anger. "Of course, you'll need it again," he exclaimed. "If you finished the exercise-book it doesn't mean that you can throw it away. You must keep it and use it all your school life... And here is a term's work on the geography of Australia, and you tear it to make these silly decorations!"

"I'm sorry, sir, I didn't think," said Jennings.

"You never think, Jennings," said Mr Wilkins. "You must be punished for what you have done." Mr Wilkins stopped for a moment and thought of a punishment. "You will stay away from the party this afternoon."

The boys were shocked.

"Oh, sir, please, sir, let him go to the party, sir," asked' Darbishire. "It's Christmas, sir."

"Be quiet, Darbishire!" said Mr Wilkins. "And you, Jennings, can spend the time on something useful. You can tidy the stationery cupboard." Mr Wilkins went to the door, but before he left the common room he turned to Jennings again and said, "Maybe it will teach you not to tear valuable exercise-books another time!"

"It's not fair!" examined Darbishire when Mr Wilkins shut the door.

"Not fair at all," agreed Temple.

"And all this after you had tried to be decent to him," said Venables.

"And sent him a Christmas card," said Atkinson.

"Well, we can't do anything about it," Jennings said in a sad voice and went out of the common room.

Chapter Forty-One
Jennings finds Mr Wilkins' fountain-pen

The stationery cupboard was not a cupboard at all. It was a small room at the end of the corridor.

Two days before Mr Wilkins had been 1 here and made up a list of the stationery f which he needed for next term. But he had no time to tidy the shelves. So when Jennings opened the door of the little room he saw exercise-books, rulers, pens, pencils and boxes of chalk scattered on the shelves and on the floor.

He began to work. Soon Darbishire's face appeared in the doorway.

"I'll help you if you like, Jen," he said. "But only till the party starts, of course." "Thank you, Darbi," said Jennings. "Of course, if there is something nice to eat at the party I'll try to take it out for you in my pocket," said Darbishire.

For some minutes they worked without saying a word. They put the books in rows and gathered together rulers and erasers.

And then Jennings made his great discovery... At the back of a shelf behind a box of chalk he found a fountain-pen. He knew whose fountain-pen it was when he saw it.

"Look what I've found!" he cried and waved the pen under his friend's nose.

"Why are you so happy? It's only an old fountain-pen," said Darbishire.

"But don't you know whose pen it is? It's Old Wilkie's!"

"That's right," said Darbishire. "It's the fountain-pen that he always uses when he corrects our exercise-books."

"But that isn't all," said Jennings. "he had lost it and was very angry when he couldn't find it."

"He doesn't deserve to get it back, if you ask me."

"Maybe not, but - well, I can't confiscate it like he confiscated my penknife," Jennings answered. Then he thought for a moment.

"If I give him back his pen he may be in a good mood and he may let me go to the party. What do you think, Darbi?"

"You never know with Old Wilkie. But we can try. Let's go and find him. The party may start any minute now."

They put the rest of the books back on the shelves. Jennings put the fountain-pen in his pocket and the boys went to the door. When Jennings closed the cupboard door a bright idea came into his head.

"Listen, Darbi, I have a wonderful idea," he exclaimed. "I'm not going to give the fountain-pen to Old Wilkie now."

"Why not?"

"Come to the dormitory with me and I'll tell you all about it."

At that moment the school bell began to ring. Along the corridor the doors opened and boys hurried to the party in the dinning hall.

"But I can't come now," said Darbishire. "I'm going to the party, Jen, even if you are not."

"We'll both go to the party, if you do what I tell you." Jennings took his friend by the arm and they hurried to Dormitory 4.

"I don't want to give Old Wilkie his fountain-pen when he is angry. He'll take it and say nothing," Jennings explained. "The right time to do it is during tea. He'll be in a good mood then."

"Yes, of course. Wait till he begins to drink his tea and then come into the dining hall and give him his fountain-pen as a Christmas present. A good plan, Jen! He will have to let you stay at the party then."

"That is not all, Darbi, it won't be me who comes into the hall - it'll be Father Christmas!"

"Father Christmas?"

"When everybody sits down at tea there

• will be a knock on the door. Everybody will ; look round and I shall come in in a red robe and white beard. I shall walk straight up to Mr Wilkins and give him his fountain-pen back - as a present from Father Christmas."

"You are right, Jen. Even Old Wilkie can't be so bad as to ask Father Christmas to leave the room," said Darbishire. "But where are you going to get the robe and the beard? You haven't got much time, you know."

Jennings, as usual, had a ready answer. He went to his bed and took from it a bright red blanket.

"I can put it over by head and pin it under by chin."

"And what about your beard?" asked Darbishire.

"Cotton wool! Matron has got a lot of it," answered Jennings.

* * *

It must be said that Mr Wilkins was going to let Jennings be present at the party. He was also going to. give him back his penknife.

But on his way to the stationery cupboard he heard the bell and at that very moment he met Mr Carter.

"You haven't dressed up yet," said Mr Carter.

"Dressed up?" asked Mr Wilkins in surprise.

Then he, remembered. Oh, yes, of course! That Father Christmas business! He had had so many things to do in the last days that he had

forgotten about it.

"You know. Carter, I think you'll be a better Father Christmas," said Mr Wilkins. "I don't think I can do it well."

"Nonsense! You'll be a wonderful Father Christmas," said Mr Carter. He took Mr Wilkins by his arm and led him to the staff room. And now Mr Wilkins quite forgot about Jennings.

"I think it will be better if you dress up here where the boys won't see you", Mr Carter said as he closed the staff room door. "I want it to be a surprise."

Unwillingly Mr Wilkins put on a red robe and a long white beard.

"That's wonderful!" exclaimed Mr Carter. "I tell you, Carter, I shall be happy when the party is over," said Mr Wilkins.

"Well, well!" said Mr Carter. "You stay here till all the boys have gone into the dining hall to tea. Then go to the kitchen and wait by the door, which leads into the dining hall. Then I'll announce that an important visitor has arrived. When you hear this you'll knock on the door and come into the hall."

"All right," said Mr Wilkins in a sad voice.

Chapter Forty-Two
Two father Christmases at one party

It was quiet in Dormitory 4 and though all the boys were in the dining hall Jennings and Darbishire were speaking in whispers.

"They've just sat down for tea," said Darbishire.

Jennings pinned the red blanket under his chin, and Darbishire began to glue cotton wool to Jennings' face.

"I only hope that it will not drop in the middle," said Darbishire.

"Oh, it will be all right in the middle. But the pieces on the sides..."

"Oh, I don't mean the middle of the beard, I mean the middle of the party."

"You will wait by the door," Darbishire said to Jennings when they left the dormitory. "I'll go first. Then you'll knock and open the door."

"And if Old Wilkie gets angry again, or my beard drops and everybody laughs!"

"You'll be all right, Jen. Have you got the fountain-pen?"

"Yes, it's in my pocket."

"That's all right, then. Let's hope for the best."

Jennings would have been surprised to know that he was not the only person who was worrying about the part which he had to play... But then, he could not know that, at that moment. Mr Wilkins in a red robe and white beard was hiding behind the kitchen door ready to go in from the other end of the dining hall.

* * *

As usual, there was a Christmas tree in the dining hall. After tea there were usually games and singing, and then a concert which was organized by the boys themselves. But this time Mr Pemberton had decided to show a film.

The party had been going for the minutes when Darbishire went into the dining hall and hurried to his place where his plate of cheese and tomatoes was waiting for him.

"Where have you been?" asked Venables.

"I can't tell you now," answered Darbishire. "It's a secret."

He looked at the top table where Mr Wilkins usually sat... and his eyes opened wide in surprise... Mr Wilkins wasn't there! He looked round the hall. Mr Wilkins wasn't anywhere in the hall!

"That is the end of our plan," Darbishire said to himself. "What will old Jen do when he comes into the hall? It's too late now to warn him. It's too late to do anything. I can only wait and see what will happen."

At that moment Mr Carter rang the bell.

"You'll be interested to hear that an important visitor has promised to come and join us this evening," he announced with a smile. "I think that our guest has already arrived and is waiting to come in."

Mr Carter coughed loudly... and Mr Wilkins knocked on the door.

All heads turned at the sound and so only some of the boys heard some taps which came from the door at the other end of the room. But Darbishire heard them and knew too well what they meant.

Then the door from the kitchen opened and the boys saw Father Christmas standing in the doorway.

There was a gasp of surprise and delight. But even a greater surprise followed... Because at the same moment that Mr Wilkins was coming into the dining hall from the kitchen, the door at the far end of the dining hall opened and a little figure in a red blanket and with cotton wool round its face came in.

The two Father Christmases stopped and stood looking at each other in surprise. All the boys turned their heads from one end of the dining hall to the other like spectators at a tennis match.

"What's going on?" asked Atkinson. "Two Father Chrismases."

"Well, why not?" said Temple. "I think they mean Big Father Christmas and Little Father Christmas, or maybe Father Christmas and Grandfather Christmas."

Mr Wilkins began to walk. Jennings began to walk too.

Slowly, the teacher and the boy walked till they met in the middle of the dining hall by the Christmas tree.

Mr Wilkins recognized Little Father Christmas at once.

"Well, well! I've never expected to meet another Father Christmas here," said Mr Wilkins.

"I didn't expect to meet you, either, sir... I mean I didn't want to come here because of... of what you said, sir," Jennings explained. "But I came for a moment to give you a Christmas present, sir."

And Little Father Christmas put his hand into his pocket and then gave Big Father Christmas a fountain-pen.

The Big Father Christmas looked in surprise. Then he took the present.

"My fountain-pen!" he exclaimed. "How wonderful! That's very kind of you, Jennings - or - Father Christmas! Thank you very much for finding it."

"That's all right, sir," said Little Father Christmas.

"Now let me see if I can give you a present," said Big Father Christmas, and he took Jennings' penknife and gave it to its owner. "Please, take this little present with my best wishes."

"Oh, thank you, sir,-I mean Father Christmas, sir."

There was a burst of applause from the boys in the dining hall.

There was still one important thing that Jennings wanted to say. Now was the time, he decided.

"I think I must go now, sir," he said. "I only wanted to give you your pen. You see, I found it in the stationery cupboard, and you said I must stay and tidy it..."

"I see what you mean," said Big Father Christmas smiling through his bear. "That was very careless of me. And now I can't ask my little brother to leave the party. So, please, stay and join us this evening."

"Oh, thank you, Father,- I mean, thank you, sir,- Father Christmas, sir."

Jennings was going to hurry to his table, but Mr Wilkins said, "Wait a minute, Jennings, or Father Christmas. We Father Christmases must say our greetings to all these people who have come here. So, let's do it together, shall we?"

"Yes, sir," said Jennings.

And the two Father Christmases said together, "A very merry Christmas to you all."

After a burst of applause Jennings took off his blanket and beard and sat down at the table to eat his cheese, tomatoes and cakes.